

# Crash probe begins

RACHEL RILEY *Townsville Bulletin* November 30, 2015 12:00AM



The scene of a light plane crash at a private airfield near Woodstock, which killed experienced pilot Ross Millard. Picture: Evan Morgan

**AVIATION investigators will examine whether a light aircraft suffered mechanical failure during takeoff before it crashed at Woodstock, killing a Townsville pilot.**

Experienced pilot Ross Millard was the sole occupant of an Australian-built 4-stroke light sport aircraft that crashed just after leaving the runway at Ace Aviation's private airfield about 6.40am yesterday. He died at the scene when it's believed the plane burst into flames on impact.

The airfield was expected to remain closed and under police guard last night to allow investigators to sift through the wreckage today.

Townsville Forensic Crash Unit officer-in-charge Sergeant Robert Nalder said a number of people were distraught after seeing the crash.

Sgt Nalder said witnesses saw the plane takeoff and gain altitude shortly before crashing at the airfield. "It is a very close-knit community, so they are all distraught about what happened."

Sgt Nalder was unable to confirm if Mr Millard was undertaking a test or joy flight at the time of the crash. "We will be assisted by Recreational Aviation Australia and I also believe the ATSB (Australian Transport Safety Bureau) will also overview the investigation," he said.

"They'll investigate the site and examine the aircraft itself to try and piece together what has occurred.

"It will take a considerable amount of time to complete the investigation and the report (for the coroner)." Civil Aviation Safety Authority spokesman Peter Gibson said Recreational Aviation Australia officials would likely travel from outside Townsville, as it's believed Mr Millard was the sole North Queensland-based investigator.

"It will be some days before we have some ideas as to what happened," he said.

"We know it had just taken off and something went wrong but nothing beyond that. "It's obviously terrible when this sort of thing happens.

"They (RAA) will give a report to us in due course, which we will review to see if there are safety lessons to learn from this tragedy."

Mr Millard is the third pilot to die in a recreational plane crash in North Queensland this year. In February, Errol Young and Robin Friend were killed when their planes crashed into each other about 7km south of Donnington Airpark at Woodstock.

Releasing the findings of its initial investigation into the fatal crash, RAA found the two aircraft collided in midair but the reason has still not been determined.

RAA found no evidence of mechanical failure.

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