

Man in serious condition following light plane crash at Woodstock

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EMERGENCY field surgery has given the pilot of light aircraft that crashed at Woodstock yesterday a fighting chance of survival.

Ian Smith, 60, suffered a heart attack after his two-seater, single-engine aircraft crashed while landing at Ace Aviation about 10.30am after a flight with his daughter, Carmen.

Police said early investigations suggested a wind gust had caused the Van's RV-6A kit aircraft to dig its front wheel into the air strip, flipping and trapping the pair.

Ms Smith was able to call for help from the crashed aircraft and it took emergency crews about half an hour to free them. It was only after Mr Smith was freed from the wreckage that his heart stopped.

The on-board doctor of the Queensland Government Air (QGAIR) rescue helicopter performed an emergency procedure after CPR initially failed to bring him back to life.

Mr Smith was stabilised and rushed into the helicopter and flown to Townsville Hospital, where he remains in a critical condition.

His daughter is in a stable condition after being driven to Townsville by an ambulance.

QGAIR pilot Nick Kelly said his crew were first to arrive on the scene, with the on-board doctor playing a critical part in reviving Mr Smith.

"The doctor and the paramedic went out and assessed that both patients were still alive, shortly after the other emergency service crews arrived," he said.

"The firies were the ones raising the aircraft up so the paramedics could get in there and actually treat the patients.

"He (Mr Smith) was extracted from the wreck for about five minutes and when they put him on the stretcher to start moving him towards the aircraft, he went into cardiac arrest.

"The doctor put an incision either side of his chest to release any pressure – we're not sure if it was that or the CPR that brought him back."

Forensic Crash Unit Senior Constable Gemma Williamson said it was likely a wind gust had caused the crash.

"The plane was landing on the airstrip and a crosswind has caused the plane to land and the front wheel has dug into the airstrip, causing the plane to flip over on to its roof," she said.

"With the plane upside down, they were trapped in position until the firies could get there and remove them using airbags to lift up the plane and take pressure off."

Sen-Constable Williamson said police on the scene had conducted a preliminary crash investigation and would be providing all the information they gathered to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

District Duty Officer Senior Sergeant Ian Wilkie praised the work of paramedics for saving Mr Smith.

"The flight doctor and paramedics did an outstanding job," he said.

"I've seen things happen there that I haven't seen before in 30-odd years, not sure I want to see them happen again either, but outstanding job in resuscitating that gentleman.

"It was simply amazing to watch the work they did on him to get him breathing again.

"We are nearly going in to field surgery ... it's more than I've seen done at most accidents."

Late last night Mr Smith was in a critical condition at Townsville Hospital. Ms Smith was in a stable condition.

Extracted from:

<http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/news/two-people-trapped-in-small-plane-at-woodstock-near-townsville/news-story/e2c5ceac26e40b6b282b516cfad878ef>

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