

## Light plane crashes west of Launceston, pilot suffers severe burns



**Photo:** The male pilot was airlifted to Hobart after first being treated at Launceston General Hospital. (ABC News: Henry Zwartz)

### **A senior Tasmanian police officer has been identified as the pilot involved in a single-engine plane crash in Northern Tasmania.**

Fifty-two-year-old Inspector Darren Hopkins is in a serious but stable condition after suffering severe burns to 25 to 30 per cent of his body when he crashed into a paddock.

Tasmania Police said a fire broke out in the cockpit while the plane was mid-air, but Inspector Hopkins was able to land the plane, exit the aircraft and phone emergency services, who were called to the scene at about 11:20am on Sunday.

Police said the plane crashed near Westwood Road, Hagley, about 30 kilometres west of Launceston.

The recreational pilot was taken to Launceston General Hospital with serious injuries before being flown to the Royal Hobart Hospital by the Westpac Rescue Helicopter.



**Photo:** Inspector Darren Hopkins is in a serious but stable condition after suffering severe burns in the crash. (Supplied)

Commander Brett Smith said it was a tough day for Tasmania Police.

"It certainly hits home but we're just pleased to see that Darren is stable and is holding his own," he said.

"It does impact our members and we're just very, very thankful ... it could very well have been much worse.

"It appears to be remarkably lucky that Darren was able to land the plane in the conditions."

Local dairy farmer Andrew Johnston said he watched the plane from about 2 kilometres away before seeing a "big puff of smoke".

He said he saw the plane flying at an altitude of about 80 metres, resembling a crop duster.

"It was just turning, like a spray plane would doing the crop, just turning around ... and then a big puff of smoke," he said.

"I didn't think that [the smoke] was the plane, though — I thought it was someone burning off."

"It's not the time that a spray plane or a fertiliser plane would be out because the ground's all dried out.

"So it was a bit unusual; it caught my eye.

"I don't know if he was looking for a paddock to land in."

Tasmania Police said the cause of the fire was unknown and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau would investigate the crash.

Extracted from:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-21/plane-crash-at-hagley-in-northern-tasmania/10401826>

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