

# Five feared dead after helicopter crash in Anna Bay

Five people are feared dead after a private helicopter crashed into waters off Anna Bay near Port Stephens, with search operations called off due to dangerous conditions.



The helicopter is a Bell uh-1/B205 owned by Brisbane Helicopters. Credit: YouTube/Brisbane Helicopters

The helicopter was travelling from Brisbane to Bankstown on Friday when police were advised it had disappeared from the Williamtown flight radar around 6.15pm.

Police confirmed the tail rotor and the main airframe of the helicopter were spotted about 8 kilometres south of Fingal Bay, however, no significant wreckage has been recovered due to adverse weather.

Four men and a woman were on board the Bell uh-1/B205 aircraft that goes by the nickname "Huey", including the helicopter's owner and experienced pilot David Kerr of Brisbane Helicopters.



Pilot David Kerr and his 4 passengers are feared dead after a helicopter crash in waters near Port Stephens

Friends said Mr Kerr has a "wonderful family" and was "always interested in flight, especially helicopters" after spending time in the navy. The helicopter had flown in Vietnam and US Marine Corps before it was restored by Mr Kerr.

Police also believe a friend of Mr Kerr, Brisbane dad Jamie Ogden, was one of the passengers on board.

*Nine News* has reported that one person on the flight was an off-duty member of the Australian Defence Force.

There have been no sightings of the passengers and a search and rescue operation led by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority was suspended at midday on Saturday due to "expert medical advice and the discovery of the damaged airframe".



“AMSA would like to thank all the agencies involved in this rescue in extremely challenging conditions and extends our deep sympathies so the family and friend of those aboard the helicopter,” a ASMA statement said.

NSW Police suspended their search on Saturday afternoon due to the dangerous conditions, but say they will resume once winds die down.

Emergency services began looking for the aircraft in waters off Anna Bay on Friday night and continued until 12.50am on Saturday, before beginning again at 7am.

It has covered about 150 square nautical miles where the radar signal was lost.

On Saturday AMSA said weather in the area at the time the aircraft went missing was "poor with strong winds and reduced visibility."

"Air traffic control indicated that the aircraft was rapidly losing altitude when contact was lost, there were no detected emergency beacons signals or Mayday calls," it said.

NSW Police Marine Area Command, Port Stephens-Hunter Police District, Westpac Rescue Helicopter, NSW Marine Rescue and other aerial support had assisted with the search.

A NSW Police vessel and the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Westpac 1 each sighted the two parts of the wreckage between 8.45am and 9.30am on Saturday morning.

An observer on Westpac 1 witnessed the airframe sink a short time later before it could be reached.

The Bureau of Meteorology had issued a severe weather warning on Friday for the region where the helicopter lost contact in Anna Bay.

It predicted damaging, locally destructive winds with peak gusts in excess of 125km/h and average gusts of 80km/h-90km/h.

It said a strong cold front from the west was sweeping across the state, generating the vigorous westerly winds.

A video published on Brisbane Helicopters' YouTube channel in December last year advertised "Huey Warbird" flights on the aircraft, with "co-pilot, observer, troop and gunner" seats.

Extracted from:

<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/nsw/wreckage-spotted-in-search-for-missing-helicopter-with-five-on-board-20190907-p52oxr.html>

On 07/09/19 at 20:03:41