

Five dead after light plane crashes on Queensland's Cape York

By [Kristy Sexton-McGrath](#) and staff



Photo: Police are on the scene and have blocked off all access to the area. (Supplied: Wayne Butcher)

Five people have been killed in a plane crash on a beach on Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, police say.

Key points:

- It is understood the pilot attempted to land twice, before crashing on the third approach
- Weather in the area is extremely poor, with a cyclone brewing off the coast
- The Australian Transport and Safety Bureau is investigating

Police said the charter flight had four government workers and a pilot on board.

Officers said the plane crashed into some dunes just east of the Lockhart River airstrip, about 800 kilometres north of Cairns, this morning.

The pilot had made two attempts to land, before it crashed on the third approach.

Police are contacting next of kin.

The plane had been reported missing around 11:30am, with the wreckage found about 1:30pm.

A search conducted by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and police found the wreckage of the twin-engine Cessna 404 Titan aircraft about four nautical miles south-east of Lockhart River aerodrome.

Police are on the scene and have blocked off all access to the area.

Weather in the area is extremely poor, with a cyclone brewing off the coast.

'Very difficult place to fly into'

Lockhart River Mayor Wayne Butcher said it was a "terrible day for us".

"It's a tragic accident and the community is in a sombre mood at the moment," he said.

"There wasn't anyone from the community on board but we do know a few of those people have been working in the community for the last few years.

"This morning was terrible weather — we had a low over the top of Lockhart River and it poured down for hours.

"The tide was high this morning when the plane was in the area and took a while for the tide to go back out so we could get to the beach and to the crash site.

"It is a very difficult place to fly into."



Photo: Lockhart River Mayor Wayne Butcher speaks with Police Inspector Mark Henderson. (Supplied: Wayne Butcher)

Acting Chief Superintendent Chris Hodgman said it took police more than two hours to locate the plane.

"There are some monsoonal winds and rain up there at the moment, so they are providing some challenging conditions," he said.

Acting Chief Superintendent Hodgman said it was too early to tell what caused the crash.

"It's really early days — I've got an inspector as a forward commander in place there at the moment and I've got a team of expert police in the building behind us supporting those people," he said.

"Tomorrow, we'll have a further nine staff flying to Lockhart from the disaster victim investigation squad and we'll be doing a joint investigation with the Australian Transport Safety Bureau."

This is the second time a fatal plane crash has happened at Lockhart River, after an accident in 2005 took the lives of 15 people.

"It's quite surreal isn't it, to have another tragedy like this at Lockhart River — it's unthinkable, really," Acting Chief Superintendent Hodgman said.

The Australian Transport and Safety Bureau (ATSB) said in a statement it was investigating the crash.

"Investigators will examine the wreckage and site surrounds, including with the use of a 3D mapping drone," the statement said.

"The ATSB will also analyse available recorded data, review weather information and interview witnesses."

The ATSB said a preliminary report would be released in about a month.

"However, at any time should a critical safety issue be identified during the course of the investigation, the ATSB will immediately notify relevant stakeholders so appropriate and timely safety action can be taken," it said.



Photo: The Lockhart River system in Far North Queensland. (Supplied: Tim O'Reilly)

Extracted from:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-11/lockhart-river-fatal-plane-crash-beach-qld-cape-york/12046400>

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