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MEDIA RELEASE

RELEASE OF FINAL REPORT ON HELI SOLUTIONS LIMITED BELL 407 HELICOPTER ACCIDENT AT GEBRAU VILLAGE, MADANG PROVINCE

The Papua New Guinea Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) today published the Final Report on the investigation conducted into a Bell Helicopter accident that occurred at Gebrau village, Madang Province.

On 22 September 2023, at 15:15 local time (05:15 UTC), a Bell 407 helicopter registered P2-HSN, owned and operated by Heli Solutions Limited was conducting a VFR passenger charter flight from Simbai to Kovon, Madang Province, when during its hover to land on a field at Gebrau village in the Kovon LLG, the helicopter's rotor blades struck a tree.

There were six persons on board the helicopter: the Pilot, a Load Master and four adult passengers. The pilot sustained minor injuries while the Load Master and passengers sustained severe injuries.

The AIC was notified on the day of the accident and immediately commenced an investigation in accordance with its mandate under the *Civil Aviation Act* and pursuant to *ICAO Annex 13 to the convention on International Civil Aviation*. A team was deployed to the accident site on 23 September 2023.

The Final report stated that during hovering to land, the pilot observed dust being stirred up, but from his previous experiences, the dust stirred up from the effects of rotor downwash would clear, so he continued the hover to land and the excessive dust on the surface of the landing area was stirred up dramatically. The downwash effects are comparable to high and gusty wind conditions, hence, the dramatic upward streaming of dust which increased in volume and size, completely engulfing the helicopter and entered the cabin and cockpit. This resulted in the pilot experiencing loss of complete visual reference and disorientation due to the dense dust.

The pilot-maintained hover over the landing area while waiting for the dust to clear. He then attempted to maneuver out of the dust with nil visibility but was unsuccessful. The helicopter drifted backwards and impacted a tree 50 m from the intended landing area.

The Final Report of the investigation is available on AIC's website www.aic.gov.pg

Authorised for release by:

Maryanne J. Wal
Chief Commissioner