



MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT & CIVIL AVIATION

MEDIA BRIEF

24 August 2024

Tragic Accident in Morobe Involving Local Operator's Islander Aircraft

I am deeply saddened by the tragic accident involving a North Coast Aviation BN2B Islander aircraft, which occurred on 22 December 2024. The wreckage was located yesterday; however, access to the site was significantly hampered by challenging terrain and adverse weather conditions. This morning, a team was winched into the crash site and regretfully confirmed that the pilot and all four passengers onboard lost their lives on impact. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of those we lost in this devastating accident.



The coordinated search and rescue (SAR) team managed to repatriate the deceased pilot to Lae today. Efforts to recover the deceased passengers are ongoing, with the coordinated SAR team working tirelessly out of Lae. SAR efforts will now prioritise recovering the deceased victims from the wreckage before further investigation activities can proceed. These efforts are vital to ensure that the victims are respectfully returned to their families for proper rest and closure. I commend the aviation entities and organizations involved in the search and recovery activities, including the PNG Defence Force, Police Force, Lae Provincial Disaster Centre, and other parties who have provided invaluable support.

The Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) has already commenced an investigation into this tragic event. The Marape-Rosso Government fully supports and is committed to facilitating the AIC in its mission to determine the circumstances and contributing factors of this accident. This investigation will be conducted independently and in strict accordance with international standards, ensuring that valuable lessons are learned and that appropriate measures are put in place to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

It is important to acknowledge that a similar accident occurred in 2017, involving the same operator, aircraft type, and vicinity. While no direct association is being drawn at this stage, the findings of the current investigation will undoubtedly provide critical insights to enhance aviation safety across Papua New Guinea.

My Ministry and the Marape-Rosso Government remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting the AIC with the resources required to conduct a thorough investigation and address any safety issues identified. Our foremost priority is safeguarding the lives of all Papua New Guineans who depend on air travel.

Further updates will be provided as the recovery and investigation efforts continue. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families and loved ones who are affected by this tragedy.

Authorised for Release
Hon. Walter D. Schnaubelt, MP
Minister for Transport & Civil Aviation