

OFFICIAL



Australian Government

Civil Aviation Safety Authority

LEGAL DIVISION

CASA Ref: F26/6037

10 March 2026

Coroner Elisabeth Armitage
Coroners Court of the Northern Territory
Darwin Local Courts
Nichols Place
Corner of Cavanagh Street and Harry Chan Avenue
Darwin NT 0800

By email to NT.Coroner@nt.gov.au

Inquest into the Death of Roger Nowland – Rel No:D0134/2023, Promis No:10383218

Dear Coroner,

I am writing in response to the Coroners Findings forwarded to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) by email on 24 November 2025. I note that the Coroner made two recommendations with one addressed to CASA and the other to the Australian Helicopter Industry Association (AHIA). I further note that the recommendation made to CASA was consistent with CASA's response to the proposed wording previously advised by the Coroner's office but with the recommendation now including a specific focus on accurate recording of flight hours and compliance with scheduled maintenance requirements.

In response to the recommendation addressed to CASA I confirm that the following steps are in progress or have been completed:

Recommendation 1 – That CASA engage more effectively with helicopter mustering operations in the Northern Territory to ensure observance of regulatory requirements and improve safety culture, specifically, concerning the accurate recording of flight hours and compliance with scheduled maintenance requirements

- CASA conducts ongoing surveillance activities for helicopter mustering operators, including both scheduled surveillance events, planned in accordance with a risk-based assessment, and unscheduled surveillance initiated in response to information provided to CASA which is assessed as warranting increased oversight.
- By the end of 2026, CASA will have introduced Safety Management Systems (SMS) to approximately 400 operators across the air transport and aerial work sectors. Many helicopter mustering operators fall within the air transport category and will, therefore, be required to implement an SMS to encompass their air transport operations. These requirements will not impact operators who only do helicopter mustering. However, many operators may choose to expand their SMS to cover all their operations. This is expected to lead to a significant improvement in safety culture over time.

As part of this transition, CASA will be undertaking broad communications to all operators about the value and importance of safety management systems and human factors training. It is expected that helicopter mustering operators will be exposed to these communications, which may have flow on impacts to engagement and voluntary uptake.

- In parallel with this transition, CASA has also commenced targeted campaign surveillance across Northern Australia, focusing particularly on smaller helicopter operators. These events have included unannounced checks of aircraft logbooks, maintenance releases, pilot duty records and hour meter accuracy.
 - o During these surveillance activities, CASA has focussed on checking situations where aircraft flight hours recorded on maintenance releases were inconsistent with expected utilisation for mustering operations, as well as cases where aircraft were operated without recording any hours, with expired maintenance releases, or with required daily inspections and scheduled maintenance not carried out.
 - o Surveillance has also focussed on identifying non-compliance with mandatory airworthiness requirements, including overdue 50 hourly and 4 monthly inspections, operation with expired or uninspected tail rotor blades, and aircraft being flown without required post maintenance check flights.
 - o These targeted activities are intended to verify and enforce compliance with regulatory requirements for accurate recording of aircraft flight time and the timely completion of scheduled maintenance, both of which are fundamental to ensuring helicopter airworthiness. The activities also serve as an opportunity to engage with the industry to educate operators on the requirements and expectations of the legislation, and how these may be addressed.
- CASA sponsored Farmsafe (being an association of national agencies for the promotion of farm safety) to deliver a series of information sheets on key topics with a safety focus, including mustering. Farmsafe is due to complete this work by 30 June 2026. CASA has also had increased interactions with the Northern Territory Cattleman's Association including providing a speaker to provide safety educational information at their 2025 and 2023 conferences.

- CASA also engaged with the various state work safe bodies to explore potential joint initiatives to address elevated risks associated with aerial work activities. This included the [Agricultural flying sector safety risk profile](#) which was conducted in November 2024 which was attended by both Farmsafe, the Aerial Application Association of Australia, AHIA and the Northern Territory Cattleman's Association.
- CASA continues to monitor compliance within the industry and identified instances of non-compliance are referred under CASA's coordinated enforcement model for investigation and possible enforcement action. In cases involving serious and/or deliberate non-compliance this includes referral to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.
- Reports from operators or the public are also important sources of information and CASA encourages people to report safety concerns through the website or 131 757.

We thank the Coroner for the opportunity to respond to the above recommendation. We consider that the engagements outlined above will serve to enhance the safety culture of aerial mustering operations, and serve as an important reminder to operators of the importance of regulatory compliance, particularly in relation to accurate recording of flight hours, and performance of scheduled maintenance requirements. If any further information should be required, please contact the writer in the first instance.

Yours sincerely



Garrick Larkin
National Manager, Legal Services