

**Question on notice no. 187**

**Portfolio question number: SQ23-003780**

**2023-24 Budget estimates**

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure,  
Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts Portfolio**

**Senator Dean Smith:** asked the Civil Aviation Safety Authority on 23 May 2023—

Senator DEAN SMITH: In the ATSB transport safety report that was done into the incident that occurred in Broome on 4 July, where a young girl lost her life, just for the record, it said there were 558 Robinson R44 helicopters in Western Australia. Before we turn specifically to the ATSB report, what is CASA's attitude with regard to the safety of Robinson R44 helicopters?

Ms Spence: It is an issue that we have been looking closely at. Probably towards the end of last year, just in response to a number of incidents involving both the R44 and the R22 helicopters, we did an analysis looking over the last 10 years to see whether we could identify any specific trends, be it location, type of operation or any other sort of causal factors that created any suggestion that there was a particular issue we needed to look into. We couldn't find any particular trends. We are monitoring it closely. We work very closely with the Australian Helicopter Industry Association. Obviously, we are concerned about the number of accidents and incidents we are seeing. As I said, we did do a review to determine whether there was anything specific that was linking the accidents and incidents.

Senator DEAN SMITH: You found it necessary to do an analysis?

Ms Spence: Yes. Based on the number of accidents and incidents that have been happening.

Senator DEAN SMITH: The analysis found no consistent determinants or issues?

Ms Spence: That's correct.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Did other aviation experts outside CASA find that analysis surprising or reassuring?

Ms Spence: We haven't discussed that with any other aviation experts.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Did the Robinson R44 helicopter manufacturer participate in that analysis?

Ms Spence: No. It was based on the data that is available. It is based on ATSB accidents and incident reports.

Senator DEAN SMITH: In Australia?

Ms Spence: In Australia, yes.

Senator DEAN SMITH: You didn't think it necessary to inquire about accidents that might have happened outside Australia?

Ms Spence: I would have to get back to you with the detail of what other factors they looked into as part of that analysis we did. I am certainly not saying that it is the end of the work that we are doing looking at it. Based on the work we have done to date, we haven't seen any causal factors that we need to act on.

Senator DEAN SMITH: So the incident that happened in Broome on 4 July, was that one of the incidents that assisted CASA come to the view that it was necessary to do this analysis?

Ms Spence: Yes. It would have been one of the accidents. As I said, it was in the 10-year time frame, so it dated back from any accident or incident from, I think, the start of 2022 back to 2012.

Senator DEAN SMITH: And the analysis found no consistent-

Ms Spence: No causal links or anything that gave rise to us to do further analysis. As I said, we are continuing to work with the Australian Helicopter Industry Association. We will continue to monitor and undertake any work we need to.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Has that analysis been peer reviewed?

Ms Spence: No. I don't think so.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Will it be?

Ms Spence: No.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Why not?

Ms Spence: We didn't have plans to do that. I can certainly take on notice what-

Senator DEAN SMITH: You obviously thought there were enough incidents to warrant CASA doing an independent analysis.

Ms Spence: Yes.

Senator DEAN SMITH: The independent analysis found no consistent causal influences or issues?

Ms Spence: Yes.

Senator DEAN SMITH: I would have thought from an aviation security perspective and abundant caution that a peer review might have been-

Ms Spence: I think it was because of the nature of the analysis done. The data is the data. We were looking at whether there is any trend. I am not saying there isn't further work we can do. It's a sensible suggestion that you are making. I will look to see what else we can do in that space.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Is the analysis a public document?

Ms Spence: No. It's not.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Will it be?

Ms Spence: Can I take that on notice, please?

Senator DEAN SMITH: Is it your decision?

Ms Spence: I would like to review the document to determine what the best course of action would be.

Senator DEAN SMITH: That is separate to my question. Is it your decision about whether or not the analysis becomes a public document?

Ms Spence: I would want to consult with the board before I release the document.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Thank you very much...

**Answer —**

Please find answer attached.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Budget Estimates 2023 - 2024**

**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

**Committee Question Number: 187**

**Departmental Question Number: SQ23-003780**

**Division/Agency Name: Agency - Civil Aviation Safety Authority**

**Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No. 130-131 (23 May 2023)**

**Topic: CASA - ATSB transport safety report**

**Senator Dean Smith asked:**

Senator DEAN SMITH: In the ATSB transport safety report that was done into the incident that occurred in Broome on 4 July, where a young girl lost her life, just for the record, it said there were 558 Robinson R44 helicopters in Western Australia. Before we turn specifically to the ATSB report, what is CASA's attitude with regard to the safety of Robinson R44 helicopters?

Ms Spence: It is an issue that we have been looking closely at. Probably towards the end of last year, just in response to a number of incidents involving both the R44 and the R22 helicopters, we did an analysis looking over the last 10 years to see whether we could identify any specific trends, be it location, type of operation or any other sort of causal factors that created any suggestion that there was a particular issue we needed to look into. We couldn't find any particular trends. We are monitoring it closely. We work very closely with the Australian Helicopter Industry Association. Obviously, we are concerned about the number of accidents and incidents we are seeing. As I said, we did do a review to determine whether there was anything specific that was linking the accidents and incidents.

Senator DEAN SMITH: You found it necessary to do an analysis?

Ms Spence: Yes. Based on the number of accidents and incidents that have been happening.

Senator DEAN SMITH: The analysis found no consistent determinants or issues?

Ms Spence: That's correct.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Did other aviation experts outside CASA find that analysis surprising or reassuring?

Ms Spence: We haven't discussed that with any other aviation experts.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Did the Robinson R44 helicopter manufacturer participate in that analysis?

Ms Spence: No. It was based on the data that is available. It is based on ATSB accidents and incident reports.

Senator DEAN SMITH: In Australia?

Ms Spence: In Australia, yes.

Senator DEAN SMITH: You didn't think it necessary to inquire about accidents that might have happened outside Australia?

Ms Spence: I would have to get back to you with the detail of what other factors they looked into as part of that analysis we did. I am certainly not saying that it is the end of the work that we are doing looking at it. Based on the work we have done to date, we haven't seen any causal factors that we need to act on.

Senator DEAN SMITH: So the incident that happened in Broome on 4 July, was that one of

the incidents that assisted CASA come to the view that it was necessary to do this analysis?

Ms Spence: Yes. It would have been one of the accidents. As I said, it was in the 10-year time frame, so it dated back from any accident or incident from, I think, the start of 2022 back to 2012.

Senator DEAN SMITH: And the analysis found no consistent—

Ms Spence: No causal links or anything that gave rise to us to do further analysis. As I said, we are continuing to work with the Australian Helicopter Industry Association. We will continue to monitor and undertake any work we need to.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Has that analysis been peer reviewed?

Ms Spence: No. I don't think so.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Will it be?

Ms Spence: No.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Why not?

Ms Spence: We didn't have plans to do that. I can certainly take on notice what—

Senator DEAN SMITH: You obviously thought there were enough incidents to warrant CASA doing an independent analysis.

Ms Spence: Yes.

Senator DEAN SMITH: The independent analysis found no consistent causal influences or issues?

Ms Spence: Yes.

Senator DEAN SMITH: I would have thought from an aviation security perspective and abundant caution that a peer review might have been—

Ms Spence: I think it was because of the nature of the analysis done. The data is the data. We were looking at whether there is any trend. I am not saying there isn't further work we can do. It's a sensible suggestion that you are making. I will look to see what else we can do in that space.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Is the analysis a public document?

Ms Spence: No. It's not.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Will it be?

Ms Spence: Can I take that on notice, please?

Senator DEAN SMITH: Is it your decision?

Ms Spence: I would like to review the document to determine what the best course of action would be.

Senator DEAN SMITH: That is separate to my question. Is it your decision about whether or not the analysis becomes a public document?

Ms Spence: I would want to consult with the board before I release the document.

Senator DEAN SMITH: Thank you very much...

### **Answer:**

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) undertakes analysis of trends in various sectors of the Australian aviation industry including the recent the R22/44 analysis. These are used to inform surveillance and safety education and generally not public documents.

CASA sought an independent review of the R22/44 report by the Australian Helicopter Industry Association (AHIA).

A copy of the report has been published on the CASA website at:

<https://www.casa.gov.au/report-robinson-helicopter-occurrences>