

Question on notice no. 183

Portfolio question number: SQ25-002616

2025-26 Supplementary Budget estimates

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

Senator Jacqui Lambie: asked the Australian Transport Safety Bureau on 11 December 2025—

- (1. How many aircraft accident investigations has the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) conducted (annualised) ?
 - a. What was the average time (in days) for the investigation?
 - b. What was the maximum time (in days) for the investigation?
 - c. What was the minimum time (in days) for the investigation?
 - d. Which of these investigations resulted in a 'fleet grounding' recommendation?
2. How many aircraft incident investigations has the ATSB conducted (annualised) ?
 - a. What was the average time (in days) for the investigation?
 - b. What was the maximum time (in days) for the investigation?
 - c. What was the minimum time (in days) for the investigation?
3. How many aircraft accident investigations, led by another entity, has the ATSB supported (annualised) and who was the lead entity?

Answer —

Please see PDF attachment.

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Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2025-2026

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

Committee Question Number: 183

Departmental Question Number: SQ25-002616

Division/Agency Name: Agency - Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Hansard Reference: Written (11 December 2025)

Topic: ATSB - Aircraft accident/incident investigations since 1 July 2005

Senator Jacqui Lambie asked:

1. How many aircraft accident investigations has the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) conducted (annualised)?
 - a. What was the average time (in days) for the investigation?
 - b. What was the maximum time (in days) for the investigation?
 - c. What was the minimum time (in days) for the investigation?
 - d. Which of these investigations resulted in a 'fleet grounding' recommendation?
2. How many aircraft incident investigations has the ATSB conducted (annualised)?
 - a. What was the average time (in days) for the investigation?
 - b. What was the maximum time (in days) for the investigation?
 - c. What was the minimum time (in days) for the investigation?
3. How many aircraft accident investigations, led by another entity, has the ATSB supported (annualised) and who was the lead entity?

Answer:

1.

a. - c. the table below shows results for the number of Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) aviation accident (only) investigations finalised each calendar year. It does not include other investigations such as Safety Studies, accident occurrence briefs (~ 100 conducted in 2025), and involvement in external body investigations.

Aircraft Accidents

Year	number of aircraft 'accident' Investigations	Average Days	Maximum Days	Minimum Days
2005 ¹	20	430	888	73
2006	32	399	1633	77
2007	17	559	903	288
2008	20	492	994	216
2009	25	444	831	133
2010	30	493	1088	86
2011	56	371	1168	74
2012	55	246	1015	83
2013	62	211	966	55
2014	83	197	957	42
2015	53	201	805	50
2016	50	283	1103	57
2017	37	296	1189	63
2018	16	429	952	130
2019	25	639	1915	105
2020	33	620	1609	171
2021	17	741	1339	274
2022	20	628	1554	122
2023	27	449	1012	99
2024	29	422	892	59
2025	33	428	1225	73

d. recommendations from 'no-blame' investigators are usually not specific with respect to the compliance action that should be taken by a regulator, such as a 'grounding'. If there is a safety issue that requires a recommendation, it is focussed on the nature of the risk, potentially identifying it as a critical safety issue if the risk of another accident is imminent. The operator and the regulator consider the appropriate safety action to take. In the case of a regulator, grounding may be an appropriate action.

¹ Note, these figures are for the 2005 calendar year and have been provided for ease of comparison. The accident investigation data from 1 July to 31 December 2005 is:

- number of aircraft 'accident' Investigations: 8
- average days: 583
- maximum days: 888
- minimum days: 414

The ATSB is not aware of any equivalent international independent safety investigative body (as described as/per ICAO Annex 13) recommending the 'grounding' of an airline.

2.

a. - c. the table below shows results for the number of ATSB aviation 'serious incident' and 'incident' (only) investigations finalised each calendar year. It does not include other investigations such as safety studies, serious incident and incident occurrence briefs, and involvement in external body investigations.

Aircraft Incidents and Serious Incidents

Year	number of aircraft 'incident' Investigations	Average Days	Maximum Days	Minimum Days
2005 ²	59	287	767	27
2006	59	359	881	46
2007	38	409	896	141
2008	36	465	941	118
2009	39	554	981	148
2010	55	360	1069	73
2011	64	289	898	74
2012	62	229	688	69
2013	77	211	770	73
2014	76	211	925	34
2015	53	328	1228	51
2016	84	278	1172	60
2017	67	258	1348	71
2018	32	466	1224	81
2019	22	565	1298	133
2020	31	714	1655	188
2021	34	392	1179	137
2022	20	424	1336	99
2023	37	423	1526	115
2024	24	431	973	133
2025	40	276	891	69

3. The table below shows aviation Investigations commenced by external agencies such as overseas investigation agencies and Australian external organisations such as police, Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), Gliding Federation of Australia (GFA), and Recreation Aviation Australia (RA-Aus) that have been supported by the ATSB. Note that many investigations spanned more than 1 year.

² Note, these figures are for the 2005 calendar year and have been provided for ease of comparison. The incident and serious incident investigation data from 1 July to 31 December 2005 is:

- number of aircraft 'incident' Investigations: 21
- average days: 319
- maximum days: 516
- minimum days: 85

Year	External investigations	Lead entity – State leading investigation or Australian agency
2005	3	New Zealand (1), Indonesia (1), United States of America (1)
2006	9	Indonesia (6), Papua New Guinea (1), Defence (1), RA-Aus (1)
2007	4	New Zealand (1), Indonesia (3)
2008	7	Indonesia (4), Solomon Islands (1), Papua New Guinea (1), France (1)
2009	6	New Zealand (1), Indonesia (3), Papua New Guinea (1), United Kingdom (1)
2010	7	New Zealand (2), Papua New Guinea (1), Indonesia (1), United States of America (1), RA-Aus (2)
2011	10	Indonesia (3), Papua New Guinea (3), New Zealand (1), Thailand (1), NSW Police (1), RA-Aus (1)
2012	13	Mongolia (1), Kazakhstan (1), Papua New Guinea (2), ASRA (1), Germany (1), CASA (1), United States of America (2), Queensland (QLD) Police (1), QLD Coroner (1), RA-Aus (1), New Zealand (1)
2013	15	Papua New Guinea (2), New Zealand (4), CASA (1), Malaysia (2), Myanmar (1), New South Wales (NSW) Police (1), Indonesia (2), RA-Aus (1), Canada (1)
2014	15	Ireland (1), Papua New Guinea (2), France (1), Spain (1), Solomon Islands (1), Netherlands (1), Malaysia (1), Ukraine (1), Indonesia (2), RA-Aus (1), New Zealand (2), United Arab Emirates (1)
2015	12	Turkey (1), Germany (1), CASA (2), GFA (1), United States of America (1), Indonesia (1), RA-Aus (3), New Zealand (2)
2016	12	Papua New Guinea (1), Central QLD Coroner (1), CASA (2), Myanmar (1), NSW Coroner (1), United States of America (3), Indonesia (1), RA-Aus (1), Pakistan (1)
2017	9	GFA (1), United States of America (2), RA-Aus (2), South Africa (1), New Zealand (3)
2018	10	United Kingdom (1), Papua New Guinea (1), Australian Helicopter Industry Association (AHIA) (1), Australian Sports Rotorcraft Association (ASRA) (1), Vanuatu (1), United States of America (1), Indonesia (1), RA-Aus (2), South Africa (1)
2019	12	United Kingdom (1), Ireland (1), Philippines (1), Japan (1), Myanmar (1), RA-Aus (5), Sweden (1), Canada (1)
2020	8	United Kingdom (1), Thailand (1), Papua New Guinea (2), Philippines (1), United States of America (1), RA-Aus (2)
2021	1	Sports Aviation Federation of Australia (SAFA) (1)
2022	8	CASA (2), United States of America (3), RA-Aus (2), New Zealand (1)

Year	External investigations	Lead entity – State leading investigation or Australian agency
2023	11	United Kingdom (1), Papua New Guinea (1), Philippines (1), Nepal (1), CASA (1), Defence (1), NSW Police (1), QLD Police (1), New Zealand (2), Tonga (1)
2024	15	Papua New Guinea (1), New Zealand (1), Sri Lanka (1), Vanuatu (1), GFA (1), United States of America (1), Indonesia (1), RA-Aus (2), New Zealand (5), Victoria Police (1)
2025	8	Fiji (1), Defence (1), GFA (1), NSW Police (1), Indonesia (2), New Zealand (2)

Note: over the past 20 years there have been significant changes to the ATSB investigation methodology, complexity, report length, remit as well as broader complexity of the aviation industry that considerably effects a year-by-year comparison.

These include, but are not limited to:

- the number and type of aviation occurrences each year;
- an exponential increase in data and evidence (physical, electronic, cloud) available to the ATSB that requires collection, analysis, interpretation, and testing;
- increasing complexity of aircraft systems (physical, electronic, communications).
- variations in available resources; and
- changes in expectations (both domestically and internationally) concerning timeframes and length and depth of investigations and reports.