

IA-124/86

SEPARATION REDUCTION

20/10/86

DC9 VH-TJJ

PROSERPINE-BRISBANE

Whilst VH-TJJ was en-route at a position approximately over the top of Mackay, a separation reduction incident occurred between the Australian Airlines aircraft and a Department of Aviation Rockwell 695B aircraft VH-LTN. At the time, both aircraft were being operated in accordance with airways clearances issued by ATC.

BASI investigation revealed that the controller who was responsible for the applicable airspace had only taken over that responsibility about 20 minutes before this incident. He had been rostered to carry out a Townsville Arrivals shift that day and had commenced that shift at 0630 hours. After operating the Arrivals sector for about three and half hours he was relieved by another controller. He had a short break, and was then asked by the Senior Area Controller to take over the Sector one position so as

to allow the controller on that sector to have a break. This action was carried out and when he assumed control of the Sector one airspace there were four aircraft in the Mackay area.

These aircraft were

AC695B	VH-LTN	Brisbane for Proserpine (FL180)
F27	VH-TQT	Rockhampton for Proserpine (but diverted just south of Mackay to Townsville (FL140)
Beech Baron	VH-HUG	Hamilton Island for Coolangatta (A 090)
F27	VH-FNQ	Hamilton Island for Rockhampton (FL 130)

All these aircraft were separated at the time that the new controller assumed the duties of the Sector. Shortly after this time DC9 VH-TJJ taxied at Proserpine bound for Brisbane at planned level FL290. This necessitated procedural separation standards being applied between VH-TJJ and all those aircraft already airborne in the Mackay area. The controller originally cleared the aircraft via Mackay at FL290 with a requirement to reach FL160 by 38 DME north of Mackay. This clearance was amended and the aircraft was assigned FL130. The aircraft departed Proserpine at 1040 hours. Following the departure of VH-TJJ from Proserpine, VH-TJR taxied at Mackay bound for Rockhampton at planned level FL210. VH-TJR was cleared to climb to amended FL120 and departed at 1046 hours. This aircraft was also a potential confliction with the other aircraft airborne, except VH-TQT which was now north of Mackay.

By this time VH-LTN had requested a clearance to descend to FL 150 and had been so cleared. The controller was then faced with the task of arranging for the two DC9s to be cleared to their desired cruising levels. He determined the relative positions of VH-TJJ and VH-TQT and cleared VH-TJJ to climb to FL 140. The controller then became involved in determining the relative positions of VH-TJR and VH-LTN apparently so that he could give VH-TJR further climb.

During the exchanges between the controller and VH-TJR and VH-LTN he twice transposed the callsigns of VH-TJJ and VH-TJR and mistakenly cleared VH-TJJ to climb to FL 210.

The controller has since stated that he immediately realised his mistake but was unable to correct the situation as the pilot of VH-TJJ, in responding to the clearance, included details of the Mackay position report. This transmission by the aircraft lasted some 26 seconds. Immediately the transmission from VH-TJJ was completed the controller instructed the aircraft to maintain FL 140. However, the aircraft had reached FL 150 and this resulted in the pilot of VH-LTN taking avoiding action. VH-TJJ then descended to FL140, before subsequently receiving further clearances.

The controller then continued with his original intention and cleared VH-TJR to climb to FL 210. The subsequent climb of this aircraft resulted in it coming into close proximity with the preceding F27, VH-FNQ, which was maintaining FL 130, although the crews of neither of these two aircraft sighted the other.

The controller continued with the operations of sector one until the rostered controller assumed responsibility for the sector at about 1115 hours.

Appropriate action has been taken with the controller concerned.

CLOSED