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Experienced Pilot Missing After Aircraft Vanishes En Route to NSW

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Authorities in Australia have launched a large-scale search operation after a light aircraft carrying a Tasmanian couple and their dog disappeared over the Bass Strait without making any distress call. The pilot, described as “very experienced” but relatively new to the aircraft, failed to make scheduled radio contact before the plane vanished on Saturday afternoon.

The two-seater plane departed from George Town in northern Tasmania around 12:45 p.m. on August 2. On board were a man in his 70s, a woman in her 60s, and their dog. The aircraft was expected to land in Leongatha, Victoria, before continuing to Hillston Airport

in New South Wales. However, it never arrived at its first destination, prompting concern from relatives, who alerted authorities just after 5 p.m.

According to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), there was no mayday call or radio communication received from the aircraft prior to its disappearance. Officials are still determining whether the aircraft disappeared before it was required to report in. Aviation safety experts have expressed concern over the lack of communication, given that standard procedures require pilots to check in when flying over open water.

“You have to do scheduled reporting,” said local flight instructor Eugene Reid. “On leaving the coast, they should have called up air services.”

Further complicating the investigation, the aircraft was equipped with an emergency satellite beacon designed to send out a distress signal in the event of a crash. Authorities have confirmed that no such signal was received.

Inspector Nick Clark of Tasmania Police stated the pilot had flown several times since purchasing the aircraft three to four months ago, but emphasized that the aircraft was still relatively new to him. Clark said the couple were flying to New South Wales to visit family.

“This is still very much a search and rescue operation,” Clark said. “Any body of water is difficult to search, but we remain hopeful.”

The search operation has drawn in resources from Tasmania Police, Victoria Police, AMSA, and regional airline Par Avion. Aircraft, helicopters, and marine vessels are currently scouring the Bass Strait, northern Tasmania, and the southern coast of Victoria, including the areas around Morwell and Leongatha.

Authorities are urging boaters, pilots, and residents in the region to report any signs of debris. “If you spot anything, even something as small as a life jacket, please contact police or AMSA immediately,” Clark added. “And if you find people in the water and it’s safe to assist, please do so.”

AMSA and local police continue to coordinate efforts as the search enters its third day. No confirmed wreckage has been located as of Monday evening.