



International Civil Aviation Organization
Asia and Pacific Office

Thirteenth Meeting of the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group (APAC-AIG/13)

(New Delhi, India 30-31 October 2025)

Agenda Item 5: Regional Cooperation

CAPABILITY BUILDING-ATSB ASSISTANCE TO PACIFIC AVIATION SECTOR

(Presented by Australia and Tonga)

SUMMARY

As a result of Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) assistance to Tonga Civil Aviation Office (TCAO) for a recent accident, the ATSB has commenced approaching Pacific States to offer training to develop their accident investigation capability.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 8 December 2023, A Lulutai Airlines SAAB 340B lost directional control; and braking while taxiing to the domestic terminal, resulting in a taxiway excursion, collision with a disused concrete refuelling bund wall, and right undercarriage leg collapse. To assist with the investigation, the Tonga Civil Aviation Office (TCAO) requested the assistance of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB), who appointed an Accredited Representative and team to assist with the investigation.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 At the time of the Lulutai Airlines accident, TCAO had limited capacity and capability for Annex 13 type investigations, mainly due to the size of the aviation sector in Tonga. However, the Tongan Civil Aviation Act had provisions for the appointment of a Chief Investigator for each Annex 13 investigation commenced. As a result, a Chief Investigator was appointed on 8 December 2023.

2.2 On 15 December 2023, after a request for assistance was received from TCAO, ATSB appointed an Accredited Representative and 2 advisors, to assist with the investigation in a capability building role. The Accredited Representative assisted the Chief Investigator develop interview plans, conduct interviews, provide guidance with evidence collection, and provided on-site expertise for the examination of the wreckage and recorders download. The mentoring role from the ATSB worked towards completion of the analysis and report development. This was the first Annex 13 investigation completed by Tonga, and the Final report was made public on 26 June 2025, and sent to ICAO and the State of Manufacture for the airframe and engine on 16 July 2025.

2.3 As a result of the successful interactions regarding the accident investigation capacity building between ATSB and TCAO, the ATSB became involved in a broader Australian Government capacity building program in the Pacific, titled *Pacific Partnership for Aviation Program*. The ATSB has commenced communicating with Pacific States with the offer of training activities to develop their accident investigation capability and ADREP to ICAO. Letters of Cooperation have been exchanged with Tonga Civil Aviation Office, and investigator training commenced in May 2025. Other States approached include Vanuatu and Fiji.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to note the ATSB's assistance towards capacity building through technical assistance throughout the Pacific States and encourages regional cooperation among States to enhance the investigation capabilities.

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