

## Government reject Erebus disaster report claims (New Zealand)



The Government has rejected claims that a failure to officially lodge a scathing report into the Erebus disaster has resulted in New Zealand not meeting its international aviation safety obligations.

The New Zealand Airline Pilots' Association this week claimed the Mahon report into the 1979 tragedy has not been lodged with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

They say the Royal Commission of Inquiry report holds critical safety lessons that should be shared with the other 191 signatories to the ICAO.

"We cannot understand why the Ministry of Transport has not yet officially submitted this report to ICAO," says NZALPA President Glen Kenny.

"This investigation report ... holds many valuable safety lessons for the aviation community and travelling public worldwide and has been widely accepted as a groundbreaking investigation into accidents caused by systemic failure."

The Ministry of Transport is uncertain if the report has been officially laid.

But APNZ can exclusively reveal the Mahon report, tabled and accepted by Parliament in 1999, has been given to the world body.

And the ICAO says while it doesn't form part of the Annex 13 - Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation report which was shaped by Ministry of Transport investigator **Ron Chippindale** in 1980, it is still well consulted by the international aviation

community.

"It (the New Zealand Government) did submit the Mahon report to ICAO," a spokesman for the Montreal-based group said today.

Eight months after New Zealand's biggest aviation disaster, when an Air New Zealand DC-10 on a sightseeing flight slammed into Mt Erebus in Antarctica, killing all 257 on board, a royal commission was launched.

Justice Peter Mahon, a High Court judge, concluded navigational programming errors were largely to blame, but slated Air New Zealand for "an orchestrated litany of lies" during the hearing.

The NZALPA today said it had always "assumed" the report had been officially lodged with the ICAO and made up part of Annex 13.

But after looking into it this year, they were "surprised" to find it wasn't included.

Responding to news that the ICAO said they had received a copy, Mr Kenny said: "That's the first I heard of it. Our enquiries to ICAO found they never officially received a copy, while the Ministry of Transport and TAIC had no record of having sent it," he said.

"It was a surprise to us. We'd always assumed it was all okay until we went and had a look."

Secretary for Transport, Martin Matthews wrote to ICAO in September this year stating that the government considers both the Chippindale and Mahon reports to be "official government reports into the accident".

Mr Kenny says that when the global aviation industry goes to ICAO to find out about an accident, Annex 13 is the go-to document.

"Until the Mahon report is submitted as an official Annex 13 record of the 1979 Mt Erebus accident, with equal status to the Chippindale Report, we are not fulfilling our international obligations. For the ministry to attempt to argue otherwise is disingenuous," he says.

The ICAO, however, were not worried about the omission when approached for comment by APNZ.

Anthony Philbin, acting chief of communications, said the Chippindale report meets its requirements in accordance with Annex 13.

He added that it's "available to anyone who wishes to consult it".

The Ministry of Transport, meanwhile, denied failing to meet its international aviation safety obligations.

A spokesman said both the Chippindale and the Mahon reports "offer valuable safety lessons".

"Both are in the public domain and have been frequently referenced over the years, including by the ICAO."

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10851128](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10851128)