AIR DATA SYSTEM FAILURE IN AIRBUS A330-243
ATSB INVESTIGATION REPORT

On 6 May 2016 The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) issued a report of its investigation into an air data system failure in an Airbus A330-243 near Brisbane, Queensland, in 2013 and details are provided below.

On 21 November 2013, after a flight from Singapore, an Etihad Airways Airbus A330, A6-EYJ landed at Brisbane airport and was taxied to the terminal. Approximately two hours later, the aircraft was pushed-back from the gate for the return flight to Singapore.

The captain rejected the initial take-off attempt after observing an airspeed indication failure on his display. The aircraft taxied back to the terminal where troubleshooting was carried out, before being released back into service.

During the second take-off roll, the crew became aware of an airspeed discrepancy after the V1 decision speed and the take-off was continued. Once airborne, the crew declared a MAYDAY and decided to return to Brisbane where an overweight landing was carried out.

Engineering inspection after the overweight landing found that the Captain’s pitot probe was almost totally obstructed by an insect nest, consistent with mud-dauber wasp residue. The pitot obstruction had occurred during the two hour period that the aircraft was on the ground at Brisbane and was not detected during troubleshooting after the initial rejected take-off.

**Safety message**
Operators can minimise the risk of pitot probe obstruction by consistently using pitot covers even during short transit periods.

Standard operating procedures include the cross-checking of airspeed during the take-off roll. These checks are an important last line of defence in preventing an aircraft from becoming airborne with airspeed indication problems.

The investigation report is available here:

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