

**ATSB Traffic management occurrence**  
**Airbus A320 and Beech Aircraft Corporation BE 76**  
**Ballina/Byron Gateway Airport, NSW 14 January 2016**

On 14 January 2016, while taking-off from Ballina/Byron Gateway Airport, Airbus A320, registered VH-VQS (VQS) and operated by Jetstar Airways, came in close proximity to Beech Aircraft Corporation BE-76 Duchess, registered VH EWL (EWL). The Duchess was conducting navigation training in the vicinity of the runway and was noticed by the flight crew of VQS during the take off roll and below the maximum speed from which they could stop.

The take-off was continued and while manoeuvring to maintain separation from EWL, the crew of VQS received master warning/caution alerts regarding the aircraft's configuration. The crew also commenced flap retraction at low altitude and turned contrary to operator-prescribed departure procedures before departing for Melbourne. There were no injuries or damage to equipment recorded during the occurrence.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) found that despite an increase in passenger numbers and a mixture of traffic, Ballina/Byron Gateway Airport operated without the support of air traffic information and/or services. While recognising that a direct comparison between airports is difficult, Ballina also experienced a higher number of incidents relating to communication and separation issues compared to airports with similar traffic levels. The ATSB also found that a number of non-standard operating practices and procedures led to a breakdown of crew resource management and the ability to adequately manage the dynamic situation by the crew of VQS.

Finally, the ATSB found that the level of communication between the crews of VQS and EWL was inadequate to develop a shared mental model of what each crew was intending to do to ensure separation.

**Safety message**

**Operations at non-controlled airports remain a safety watch priority for the ATSB. This occurrence highlights that traffic separation in that environment relies on a clear and shared plan between involved aircraft.**

Adherence to standard operating practices and procedures promotes a shared understanding of crew's actions by making them ordered and predictable to the other pilots.

As well as reducing the likelihood of task omission or duplication during times of high workload, standardised practices and procedures decrease the mental

demand on flight crew when carrying out a set of complex steps, allowing for better processing of unexpected events.

ATSB's investigation report: *Traffic management occurrence involving Airbus A320, VH-VQS and Beech Aircraft Corporation BE 76, VH-EWL at Ballina/Byron Gateway Airport, NSW on 14 January 2016* was issued on 19 May 2017.

Readers may wish to be aware that the ATSB document is now available for downloading here:

[http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation\\_reports/2016/aair/ao-2016-003/](http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation_reports/2016/aair/ao-2016-003/)