



Media Release – 20 February 2007

Helicopter Mishap Will Not Slow UAV Uptake

(Brisbane, Australia)

It was reported by the Australian media that the QUT / CSIRO R/C helicopter made an unscheduled hard landing during a launch in Brisbane yesterday.

Some good ideas just never take off as they should

Steven Wardill

CRASH landings are never a good option.

But there could not have been a worse time for a pilotless plane to go down than yesterday at the launch of a new competition spruiking the merits of the new-age aircraft.

The yellow "uninhabited aerial vehicle" hit the turf of the Gabba harder than any footballer ever has, as a crowd of about 50 interested spectators looked on.

The flight, which lasted barely a minute, was being staged as a promotion for a new competition where enthusiasts and students can win prize money for building their own



pilotless plane (drone). On the sidelines, Premier Peter Beattie laughed off the crash — saying "you have got to have a few bumps along the way" — and declared unmanned aircraft were "very much the future".



"Long-term, we would love to see these used to safeguard our fishing areas from illegal fishing vessels," Mr Beattie said. "We could actually have them used by the police service for monitoring traffic."



Oops ... the drone makes a promising start, left, before crashing, middle, leaving a dent.

Pictures: Bruce Long

First-placed university students and hobbyists will have the chance to win \$40,000 in the competition, while high-school students will compete for a \$20,000 prize.

The director of the Australian Research Centre for Aerospace Automation, Rod Walker, said the competition would promote more interest in the estimated \$500 million-a-year industry.

"Most of all we want students and researchers to learn about this exciting area of the aerospace industry and perhaps set the foundation for their future careers," Associate Professor Walker said.

Watch the crash at couriermail.com.au 20 FEB 07

Managing Director of V-TOL Aerospace Mark Xavier said, "This mishap will not slow UAV development in this country. V-TOL Aerospace well understands the technical complexity of UAV helicopters. Helicopters represent the difficult end of the UAV spectrum and are the most prone to technical problems. It was just unfortunate timing that a problem arose during the high profile Brisbane launch."

He continued, "V-TOL ceased i-Copter™ development 18 months ago and is pursuing other types of VTOL technology for the reasons already stated. It must be noted that UAVs fly very successfully everyday around the world, including Australia. The Australian UAV industry is entering a growth period that will deliver significant value to the country through technology, innovation, and services."

Initiatives such as UATAR™ have been put in place by industry to address UAS systems reliability, regulations, and enabling support structures needed to safely grow the industry. UATAR™ (see www.uatar.com) has established Working Group 27 to specifically address these issues. Industry stakeholders are encouraged to join WG-27. For further information, please contact uatar@v-tol.com