

Missing pilot reported UFO 'playing with Cessna'

MELBOURNE: A pilot missing in Bass Strait reported being buzzed by an unidentified object for a quarter of an hour before losing radio contact with Melbourne air-traffic controllers, a Department of Transport spokesman said yesterday.

The department's public-relations officer, Mr Ken Williams, said

the pilot radioed air-traffic controllers at 7pm on Saturday and reported an aircraft flying below him at about 4,500 feet.

Mr Williams said the controllers told the pilot there were no other aircraft in the area. The pilot then asked control to check if it could be an air-force aircraft, considering the speed it was travelling. The controllers reported no other aircraft, including air-force aircraft in the area.

The pilot then told controllers the object was long and metallic, with four bright lights on the top, and appeared to be playing with the Cessna. The pilot's last communication with ground control was that he was having trouble with

tion with ground control was that he was having trouble with one engine after the object had hovered over him for some time but he was heading toward King Island.

The department believed it was possible the pilot was disoriented and was flying his aircraft upside

down during the conversation with ground control.

It was possible the pilot was seeing the lights of the Cape Otway lighthouse and that of King Island as he was flying inverted in the early evening.

However, the department had not discounted the possibility of an unidentified flying object, although there had been no other reports of anything unusual in the area.

An RAAF Orion search aircraft spotted an oil slick in the area the light aircraft is believed to have gone down.

The search would resume at first light in the area of the slick where the Orion dropped a marker buoy.

The missing pilot is Mr Frederick Valentich, of Avondale Heights, Melbourne.

Sequence of events and radio exchanges with air-traffic controllers.

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Pilot's UFO report

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The following is the sequence of events and the exchange between the missing pilot and the traffic controllers:

AT 7pm on Saturday the aircraft reported over Cape Otway that he was proceeding to King Island.

At 7.06pm the pilot asked Melbourne flight service if there was any known traffic in the area below 5,000 feet. Flight service replied: No known traffic in your area. The pilot then called up and said there seemed to be a large aircraft below 5,000 feet. Flight service requested the type of aircraft and the pilot replied: I cannot confirm. It has four bright lights that appear to be landing lights. The aircraft has passed over me about 1,000 feet above. Flight service then queried him: Is it a large aircraft? The pilot responded in the affirmative: and at the speed its travelling are there any RAAF aircraft in the vicinity? Flight service said no.

At 7.08pm the pilot again called up and said: It's approaching from due east towards me. It seems to me to be playing some sort of game. It's flying at a speed I cannot estimate. Flight service queried his altitude and the pilot replied 4,500 ft. Flight service then asked him: Can you confirm you can't identify aircraft? The pilot replied: affirmative.

At 7.09pm the pilot again called up

At 7.09pm the pilot again called up and said. It's not an aircraft it's. . . .

[and there was a temporary break in transmission]. Flight service again called and said: Can you describe the aircraft? The pilot replied: It is flying past, it is a long shape. I cannot identify more than that. It's coming for me right now.

At 7.10pm flight service asked him how large it was and the pilot replied: It seems to be stationary. I'm orbiting and the thing is orbiting on top of me also. It has a green light and a sort of metallic light on the outside. A few seconds later the pilot told flight service that the object had vanished. Flight service then asked him to confirm that the object had vanished. The pilot confirmed and then asked: Do you know what type of aircraft I've got. Is it military? Flight service responded: No known military traffic in the area.

At 7.12pm the pilot told flight service his engine was rough idling and was coughing. Flight service then asked him his intentions. The pilot replied that he was proceeding to King Island, adding: Unknown aircraft hovering on top of me. Flight service then acknowledged that call and then there came a long metallic noise over the radio and communication with the aircraft was lost.

The pilot's father, Mr Guido Valentich said he believed the Department of Transport was "trying to cover up so

Transport was "trying to cover up so people won't get alarmed".