

# Hunt on for answers in UFO mystery

## Photo clues scarce

DEFENCE experts cannot explain a UFO caught on camera in Melbourne's north, but sceptics believe it is nothing to get excited about.

The UFO was snapped in Beveridge by a Whittlesea traffic engineer on January 15. That prompted the council to place the shot on its website on Friday, appealing for witnesses. The council also referred it to the Department of Defence.

Council spokesman Jim Linton said yesterday experts at the Defence Science and Technology Organisation had no idea what the object could be.

In an e-mail to Mr Linton, the organisation's PR manager said: "I'm afraid DSTO is not an authority on the identification or investigation of

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unidentified objects and I'm not aware of any government department that does deal with these sorts of matters."

Meanwhile, sceptics are convinced the UFO could turn out to be nothing more exciting than a porcelain power insulator, a bird or a fly.

Australian Skeptics member Don Allison said the object could have been a disc-shaped insulator used on high-voltage electricity transmission lines.

"We had a case a few years back in Perth where these chaps perpetrated a UFO deception by throwing these discs like frisbees up above some sand dunes and then photographing them," Mr Allison said.

"The chaps throwing were concealed behind



**Full flight:** The UFO (ringed) photographed in Beveridge by a Whittlesea traffic engineer on January 15.

the dunes and the effect was of a UFO flying out over the ocean.

"Eventually, they owned up and the mystery evaporated."

Mr Allison said the photograph could also be an optical trick.

The Skeptics UFO spokesman Dr Steve Roberts believed it was probably a bird or fly.

"The object is out of focus, but the background is in focus, therefore it is near the camera," he said. "That

would also explain why no-one else saw it."

Mr Linton said Whittlesea Council had no view on what the object was, but he was confident there was no prank.

"The engineer has assured us he has not played a prank," Mr Linton said. "As you could imagine, there would be consequences if it was a prank and nobody would want to put their job on the line for something like this.

"And the engineer

would have noticed if it was kids throwing discs up in the air because there is nothing there. It is just farmland."

The council was yesterday still waiting for the Civil Aviation Authority's views on the photograph, and planned to send an e-mail alerting NASA to the image.

But because NASA would not accept e-mail attachments, the council would direct them to the image on its website, Mr Linton said.

### SPIRIT CALLS

NASA has received data from the Spirit rover, ending fears that the Mars mission may have come to a calamitous halt, but the rover's condition remains "critical" and restoring it to full function could take weeks.

The computer onboard is sensing a software or hardware problem and is repeatedly trying to reboot.