



Office of Transport Safety Investigations

FACTUAL STATEMENT

BURRUM SCHOOL BUS MO 7509 ROLL OVER

BROCKLESBY NSW

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The Office of Transport Safety Investigations (OTSI) is an independent NSW agency whose purpose is to improve transport safety through the investigation of accidents and incidents in the rail, bus and ferry industries. OTSI investigations are independent of regulatory, operator or other external entities.

Established on 1 January 2004 by the Transport Administration Act 1988, and confirmed by amending legislation as an independent statutory office on 1 July 2005, OTSI is responsible for determining the causes and contributing factors of accidents and to make recommendations for the implementation of remedial safety action to prevent recurrence. Importantly, however, OTSI does not confine itself to the consideration of just those matters that caused or contributed to a particular accident; it also seeks to identify any transport safety matters which, if left unaddressed, might contribute to other accidents.

OTSI's investigations are conducted under powers conferred by the Rail Safety Act 2008 and the Passenger Transport Act 1990. OTSI investigators normally seek to obtain information cooperatively when conducting an accident investigation. However, where it is necessary to do so, OTSI investigators may exercise statutory powers to interview persons, enter premises and examine and retain physical and documentary evidence.

It is not within OTSI's jurisdiction, nor an object of its investigations, to apportion blame or determine liability. At all times, OTSI's investigation reports strive to reflect a "Just Culture" approach to the investigative process by balancing the presentation of potentially judgemental material in a manner that properly explains what happened, and why, in a fair and unbiased manner.

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Incident

At approximately 1625 on 18 March 2016, a school bus operated by Burrum Bus Services with the driver and two year six primary school children on board rolled on its near side when the bus failed to negotiate a 90⁰ right-angled bend on Thornbury Road Brocklesby, 50 km north-west of Albury NSW. Thornbury Road had a maximum allowable speed of 100 km/h¹.

The two school children, both wearing seat belts, were not injured; however, the driver, also wearing a seat belt, suffered an injury to his right shoulder. The young schoolboy released the driver from his position, opened the emergency rear door and assisted the occupants clear of the bus.

The Bus

The bus was a 2013 ROSA 24-seat capacity bus and was registered with the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) NSW.

An examination of maintenance records showed that the bus was in a serviceable condition and had been maintained in accordance with the company's maintenance plan. On 16 March 2016, two days prior to the incident, the bus brake system had been fully inspected and the brakes adjusted.

The Driver

The driver held a current and relevant motor vehicle driver's licence and held the appropriate NSW Roads and Maritime Services bus driver's authority. Both endorsements were due to expire on 16 March 2017. The driver had only been employed with the Burrum Bus Company since 8 February 2016.

¹ Thornbury Road. is unsealed and unposted. The RMS website states that where a road is unsealed and un-posted, the default speed limits apply and you must drive to the conditions. The default speed limit for NSW is 100 km/h.

The driver's post-accident report stated:

"Travelling along Thornbury Rd I approached a bend and applied the brakes to slow down. There was no reaction from the foot pedal and at about 70 kph I was unable to go around bend as a following gale force flipped the bus over."

The driver initially informed the bus owner that he was travelling along Thornbury Road at a speed of 80km/h and he had started to slow the bus down near a group of trees about 100 metres before the corner involved in the accident. The driver said he did not apply the exhaust brake or change to a lower gear to slow down the bus. The bus remained in top (sixth) gear while negotiating the accident corner.



Photograph 1: Wheel marks at corner (Source: South Albury Truck Repairs)

Environmental conditions

Due to its remoteness, formal weather data is not recorded for this specific location. Witnesses and locals advised there was heavy rain in the morning, with no rain and gale force winds in the afternoon. Photographs taken by the bus owner shortly after

the incident shows evidence of rainwater remaining in pot holes on the road, however, generally the road surface was dry.

Passenger's action

The actions of the eleven-year-old school boy deserve recognition. After the rollover, the boy assisted the eleven-year-old girl from her seat belt, then assisted to free the driver who was hanging in his seat belt. He then went to the rear of the overturned bus, opened the rear emergency escape door and assisted the girl and driver exit to a safe place away from the bus. The boy then started to walk to a nearby farm property to get assistance; however, a farmer passing the incident site stopped and rendered assistance.



Photograph 2: Rear escape door (Source: South Albury Truck Repairs)

Brake examination

OTSI quarantined the bus until the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) heavy vehicle examiners inspected the bus's braking system. The bus was taken to a holding yard in Albury pending the RMS inspection.

The RMS Examiner attended the holding yard on 22 March 2016 and after the examination determined there were no faults identified with the brake system. The report indicated that all test findings were normal and matched previous inspection data recorded by RMS.

Findings

The investigation determined that the rollover was not a mechanical failure of the bus's brake system.

The speed of the bus negotiating a 90⁰ right-angle bend on a dirt road and in windy conditions resulted in the bus rolling on its near side.

The fact that the two passengers and driver were wearing seat belts is likely to have prevented a more serious outcome from occurring.

The action of the eleven-year-old boy in evacuating the occupants deserves recognition.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the following additional safety actions be undertaken by bus operators and bus industry associations:

1. Where buses are seat belt equipped, bus operators are to remind their drivers to ensure all bus occupants wear seat belts at all times.
2. Bus drivers to drive cautiously when operating on unsealed roads and select a speed that will enable the driver to maintain safe control of the bus in any situation, regardless of the road's default speed limit.
3. Drivers to undergo route knowledge training which identifies road locations where extra caution is required, and additionally, include recommended driving and braking techniques to apply when entering corners.

Acknowledgements

Provision of Photographs 1 and 2 and permission for their use was provided by South Albury Truck Repairs 247 Macaulay St. South Albury NSW 2640.

OTSI would like to acknowledge the assistance and cooperation in this investigation by Burrum Bus Company and the NSW Roads and Maritime Service.