



Office of Transport Safety Investigations

BUS SAFETY INVESTIGATION INTERIM FACTUAL STATEMENT

BUS FIRE

SURRY HILLS

27 NOVEMBER 2017



THE OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS

The Office of Transport Safety Investigations (OTSI) is an independent NSW agency whose purpose is to improve transport safety through the investigation of incidents and accidents 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 (NSW)*, and confirmed by amending legislation as an independent statutory office on 1 July 2005, OTSI is responsible for determining the 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 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 *Transport Administration Act 1988 (NSW)* and *Passenger Transport Act 1990 (NSW)*. Additionally, all OTSI publications that are considered investigation reports are also conferred by these Acts. OTSI also conducts rail investigations on behalf of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau under the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003 (Cwlth)*. 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 our balanced approach to the investigation, in a manner that properly explains what happened, and why, in a fair and unbiased manner.

Once OTSI has completed an investigation, its report is provided to the NSW Minister for Transport and Infrastructure for tabling in Parliament. The Minister is required to table the report in both Houses of the NSW Parliament within seven days of receiving it. Following tabling, the report is published on OTSI's website at www.otsi.nsw.gov.au.

Incident Overview

At 1925,¹ on Monday 27 November 2017, a Sydney Buses bus, MO4874, caught fire near the intersection of South Dowling Street and Flinders Street at Surry Hills. At the time, the bus was travelling with the driver and approximately 33 passengers on board. The bus operator was first alerted to smoke in the rear of his bus by a passing motorist. He stopped and attempted to extinguish a fire in the engine compartment with a portable fire extinguisher without success.

The vehicle was also fitted with an engine bay fire suppression system. When activated, the system alerts the driver of a problem via a dashboard visual and audible alarm. The fire suppression system activated, but was not able to fully extinguish the fire.

NSW Fire and Rescue attended and were able to fully extinguish the fire.

There were no injuries however, the bus was significantly damaged by the fire.

Bus Information

The bus was built in the year 2008. It was originally imported by Mercedes-Benz Australia and the body was assembled by Custom Coaches, Villawood, NSW. The bus operated out of the Port Botany bus depot and was one of 254 compressed natural gas (CNG) fuelled Mercedes-Benz model buses owned and operated by Sydney Buses. It was authorised to carry 59 passengers.

Post Incident

Later that morning the bus was towed back to the STA Leichhardt bus depot. OTSI advised Sydney Buses to quarantine the bus pending an OTSI examination. The bus was examined by an OTSI investigator the next morning.

As a result of information obtained by OTSI, the Chief Investigator determined that the incident warranted formal investigation in accordance with Section 46BA of the *Passenger Transport Act 1990*.

¹ Times in this report are in 24-hour clock form in Australian Eastern Daylight Time.

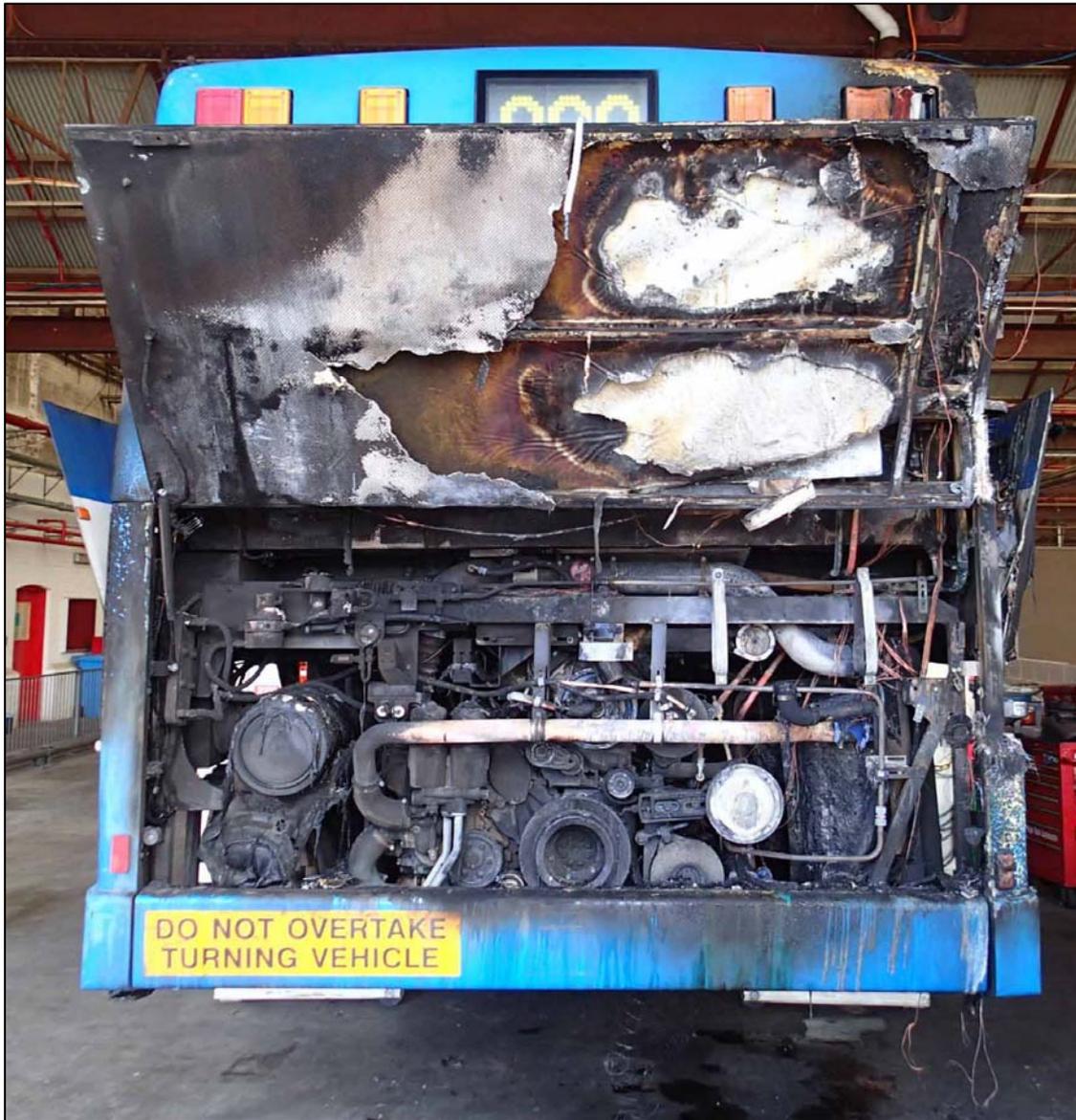


Figure 1: Condition of the engine bay of the bus after the fire

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference established by the Chief Investigator require OTSI's Investigating Officer to:

- a. identify the factors, both primary and contributory, which led to the incident;
- b. advise whether the incident might have been anticipated and the effectiveness of any strategies that were in place to manage the related risks; and
- c. advise on any matters arising from the investigation that would enhance the safety of bus operations.

Status of the Investigation

OTSI's investigation has commenced. During the course of the investigation, all Directly Involved Parties (DIPs) will be consulted and will be afforded the opportunity to provide information and commentary, which will contribute to ensuring that the investigation and its report are inclusive and comprehensive.

Once completed, OTSI's investigation report will be tabled in both Houses of the NSW Parliament by the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure in accordance with Section 46D of the *Passenger Transport Act 1990*. When the report has been tabled, it will be published on OTSI's website and will replace this Interim Factual Statement.