



Office of Transport Safety Investigations

FERRY SAFETY INVESTIGATION

INTERIM FACTUAL STATEMENT

SUPERCAT 4 COLLISION WITH BACKBOARD

CIRCULAR QUAY, SYDNEY HARBOUR

11 October 2016



OTSI reference 04745

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*, 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* and *Passenger Transport Act 1990*. Additionally, all OTSI publications that are considered investigation reports are also conferred by this Act. 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, 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 approximately 1610 on 11 October 2016 the ferry SuperCat 4, operated by Harbour City Ferries (HCF), was returning from the 1510 Watsons Bay service. The ferry was brought to a halt as it approached Circular Quay as no berth was available. When authorised, the ferry proceeded towards Wharf 5 East to disembark passengers. Following what the crew reported as a control failure it continued beyond its berth on the wharf and struck the timber backboard (safety barrier).

HCF reported that the collision occurred at an estimated speed of four knots. The blunt (straight edged) bow of the ferry suffered minimal damage after making contact with the backboard at an angle of approximately 90 degrees. The ferry recoiled following the impact and at about the same time the crew regained control using the backup control system. The ferry was then manoeuvred alongside Wharf 5 East.

The General Purpose Hand, standing in position on the lower deck to secure the ferry, realised the ferry was not going to stop and yelled a warning to all the passengers to brace themselves before the collision. However a number of passengers lost their footing during the collision. Over 20 passengers received injuries with five being transported to hospital, one with suspected spinal injuries.

The Office of Transport Safety Investigations (OTSI) was notified of the accident by HCF at 1620. OTSI gave HCF permission to have the ferry moved to Balmain Ship Yard (BSY), to be held there for inspection. HCF moved the ferry using a tug.

On 12 October 2016, two OTSI Investigators were deployed to BSY to conduct an examination of the ferry and conduct preliminary interviews with the crew.

The OTSI Chief Investigator determined that a formal investigation under Section 46BA (1) of the *Passenger Transport Act 1990 (NSW)* was warranted.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of reference are:

- Determine the contributory factors which led to the collision
- Examine the response to the loss of control by the crew
- Crew Training
- Operating Procedures
- Examine the functionality of the ferry's control systems
- Vessel maintenance
- Examine HCF's risk register for 'loss of control' incidents
- Regulatory context
- Passenger Safety
- Any other safety issues arising from the investigation

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 comment on the draft report before it is finalised.

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.