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OFFICE OF  
TRANSPORT  
SAFETY  
INVESTIGATIONS

## OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS



# Ferry Safety Investigation Interim Factual Statement

**Collision of Sydney Ferries Corporation RiverCat  
*BETTY CUTHBERT* at Number 5 Wharf Circular Quay  
23 September 2005**



OTSI File Reference: 04205

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.

Established on 1 January 2004 by the *Transport Administration Act 1988*, the Office 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.

OTSI investigations are conducted under powers conferred by the *Rail Safety Act 2002* 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. Where OTSI investigators exercise their powers of compulsion, information so obtained cannot be used against those persons providing information in criminal or civil proceedings.

OTSI investigation reports are submitted to the Minister for Transport for tabling in both Houses of Parliament. Following tabling, OTSI reports are published on its website [www.otsi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.otsi.nsw.gov.au)

Information about OTSI is available on its website or from its offices at

Level 21, 201 Elizabeth Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Tel: (02) 8263 7100

PO Box A2616  
Sydney South NSW 1235

The Office of Transport Safety Investigations also provides a Confidential Safety Information Reporting facility for rail, bus and ferry industry employees. The CSIRS reporting telephone number is 1800 180 828.

## **Overview**

At 6.55AM on Friday 23 September 2005, the passenger ferry *Betty Cuthbert*, a RiverCat class vessel operated by Sydney Ferries Corporation (SFC), was inbound to Circular Quay for its berth at No.5 East Wharf. As it approached this location, the master advises that the vessel's port propulsion control handle became detached from its spindle, leaving him with only starboard propulsion control. He further advises that the malfunction occurred in close proximity to No.5 East Wharf and that in the few seconds available to him, he was unable to regain control of the vessel. As a consequence, *Betty Cuthbert* struck a steel pile, intended to assist vessels as they manoeuvre into their berths, between No. 5 and No. 4 Wharves.

As a result of the collision, *Betty Cuthbert's* port bow sustained a 50 centimetre deformation and fracture along the leading edge at deck level.

Sydney Ferries Corporation advised that there were no passengers on board *Betty Cuthbert* at the time and that neither of the two crew members were injured as a result of this incident. They also advised that *Betty Cuthbert* was taken out of service for inspection and repair.

## **Investigation**

OTSI investigators deployed to Circular Quay and commenced a preliminary investigation. The Chief Investigator subsequently determined that the circumstances and nature of this incident warranted formal investigation by OTSI in accordance with Section 46BA of the *Passenger Transport Act 1990*.

The purpose of this investigation is to:

- a. establish why the accident happened and what caused it;
- b. identify whether there are any organisational, operational, logistic, financial, administrative, human or other factors which compromised vessel operating safety systems and contributed to the cause/s of the accident;
- c. ascertain whether this type of accident had been, or should have been, anticipated and whether there were appropriate contingency plans in place to manage the related risk/s;

- d. assess the effectiveness of emergency actions that were initiated in response to the accident;
- e, make recommendations to prevent, or at the very least minimise the potential for, recurrence of this type of accident, and
- f. propose any course of action that would enhance the provision of safe ferry services.

## **Report**

This investigation will be conducted pursuant to Section 45A of the *Transport Administration Act 1988* and Section 46BA of the *Passenger Transport Act 1990*.

When the investigation is completed, OTSI's report will be submitted to the Minister for Transport for tabling in Parliament in accordance with Section 46D of the *Passenger Transport Act 1990*.

When the Report has been tabled, copies will be made available to all directly interested parties and will be published on the OTSI website.