



FERRY SAFETY INVESTIGATION

INTERIM FACTUAL STATEMENT

**SYDNEY FERRY MV *SIRIUS* COLLISION WITH
AQUARIUM WHARF, BERTHED VESSEL AND
PYRMONT BRIDGE**

DARLING HARBOUR

22 MARCH 2007



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*, 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.

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 by other agencies in any subsequent civil or criminal action against those persons providing information.

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.

OTSI's investigative responsibilities do not extend to overseeing the implementation of recommendations it makes in its investigation reports. However OTSI is kept informed of the extent to which its recommendations have been accepted and acted upon through advice provided in the Quarterly Report on the status of recommendations arising from OTSI investigations which is submitted to the Minister for Transport by the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator (ITSRR) which monitors the implementation of OTSI recommendations by those organisations to whom they are directed.

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

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Sydney NSW 2000
Tel: (02) 9322 9200

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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.

Incident Overview

At approximately 1:08pm on Thursday 22 March 2007, Sydney Ferries' vessel MV *Sirius* was on a regular service run from Circular Quay to Darling Harbour and was due to make a scheduled stop at the Sydney Aquarium Wharf. As the ferry approached the Wharf from the North, the Master was controlling the vessel from the Port control station and initiated a berthing manoeuvre by moving the control levers to engage the engines and propellers in reverse thrust. However, the ferry continued its forward motion at a speed of approximately five knots, and despite the fact that the Engineer shut down both engines at the direction of the Master, it collided with the Aquarium Wharf and a moored vessel, *Ocean Dreaming*, before it continued on and struck the underside of Pymont Bridge. The Master subsequently reported that the vessel did not respond to his command inputs from the Port control station.

The *Sirius* sustained impact damage to the port bow and wheelhouse roof structures. Paint transfer was the only damage sustained by Sydney Aquarium Wharf, *Ocean Dreaming* and Pymont Bridge.

Emergency Response

There were no reports of injuries to the passengers on board the *Sirius* and those on shore in the vicinity of the Wharf.

NSW Water Police and Maritime Authority officers attended the scene of the accident and commenced their respective investigations. NSW Maritime Authority investigators participated in post-collision trials of the vessel as it returned to Balmain Shipyard under its own power and control. OTSI Investigators attended Balmain Shipyard and boarded the vessel where they conducted a preliminary investigation.

On the basis of the information acquired by OTSI's Investigators, the Chief Investigator determined that the incident warranted investigation by OTSI in accordance with the provisions of Section 45A of the *Transport Administration Act 1988* and Section 46BA of the *Passenger Transport Act 1990*.

Terms of Reference

The Instrument of Appointment and the Terms of Reference prescribed by the Chief Investigator require OTSI's Investigator in Charge to:

- determine why the Master of the *Sirius* was unable to exercise effective control of the vessel as he prepared to berth at Sydney Aquarium Wharf;
- determine whether there are any deficiencies in the reliability, functionality, ergonomics and redundancy features of the vessel's control systems which may have contributed to the cause of the accident;
- determine whether there were safety defences in place to prevent this type of accident and if there were, why they failed on this occasion;
- evaluate the adequacy of the individual, crew and corporate-level emergency response actions, and
- advise on any matters of operational and safety significance that are identified during the course of the investigation that would enhance the safety of ferry operations.

Status of the Investigation

OTSI's investigation has commenced. Once completed, OTSI's investigation report will be tabled in Parliament by the Minister for Transport 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.