



Office of Transport Safety Investigations

RAIL SAFETY INVESTIGATION

INTERIM FACTUAL STATEMENT

DERAILMENTS OF 5M28 AND NP23

CURRABUBULA

31 JANUARY 2014



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 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 Transport Administration Act 1988 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.

Once OTSI has completed an investigation, its report is provided to the NSW Minister for Transport 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.

OTSI cannot compel any party to implement its recommendations and its investigative responsibilities do not extend to overseeing the implementation of recommendations it makes in its investigation reports. However, OTSI takes a close interest in the extent to which its recommendations have been accepted and acted upon.

Incident Overview

At approximately 1525 on Friday 31 January 2014, while travelling between Werris Creek and Tamworth (see *Figure 1*), the driver of NSW Trains' passenger service NP23 noted a slight ripple within the track followed in close proximity by a significant buckle. The train at the time was travelling at approximately 100 km/h with approximately 80 passengers onboard. The driver immediately applied the emergency brake but was unable to stop short of the buckle which resulted in the lead wheel set of the 3rd carriage derailing.

The driver reported the incident to the John Holland Network Control Centre North West at Mayfield, Newcastle, and advised that he believed two of the passengers had sustained injuries and required medical attention.

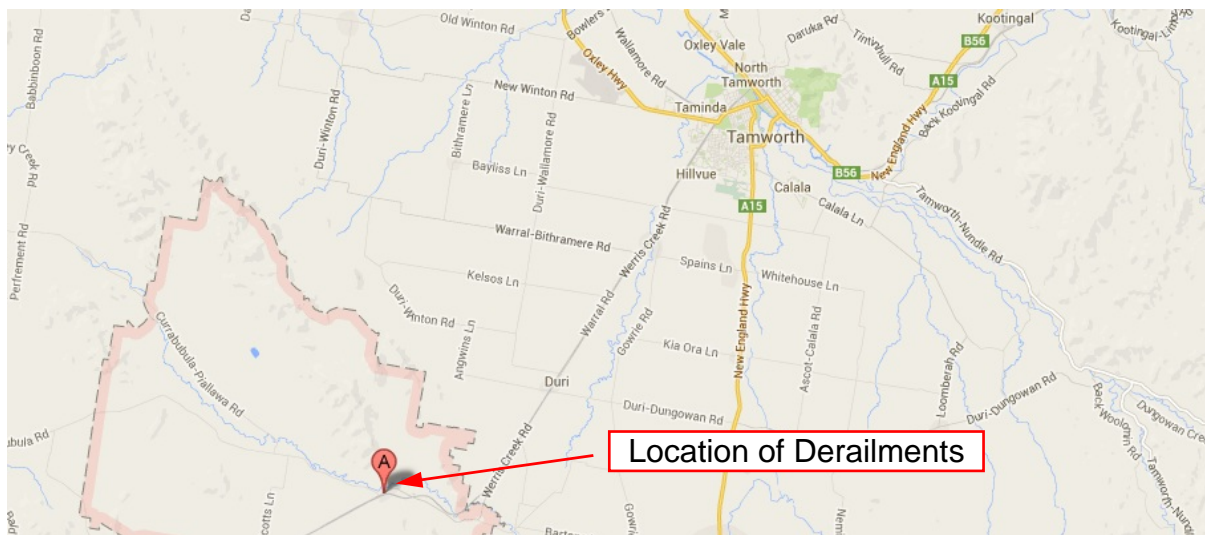


Figure 1: Incident location

The network control officer immediately arranged protection for NP23 from both directions as the line between Werris Creek and Tamworth is a single, bi-directional working line.

Prior to the derailment of NP23 a Southern Shorthaul Railway (SSR) freight train (5M28) had travelled through the location in the opposite direction approximately 25 minutes prior to NP23. The crew stated that they had not observed any form of ripple or buckle within the track structure. However, they reported their train had parted between the 4th and 3rd last wagon in the general vicinity of the derailment.

When investigators checked the track in the location of the reported ripple, they noted markings signifying that a train had derailed when travelling towards Werris Creek. SSR was requested to recheck the wagons on 5M28 and, on doing so, the wheels of the leading bogie of the 3rd last wagon were found to have derailed at some point.

On receipt of notification of the incident, an Office of Transport Safety Investigations investigating officer was deployed to the derailment site. On reviewing the preliminary incident information the Chief Investigator determined that the derailment warranted formal investigation pursuant to *Section 46BA* of the *NSW Passenger Transport Act 1990*.

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 rail 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 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 in accordance with *Section 46D* of the *NSW 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.