



Office of Transport Safety Investigations

RAIL SAFETY INVESTIGATION
INTERIM FACTUAL STATEMENT
HAWKESBURY RIVER RAILWAY BRIDGE

14 September 2015



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 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.

Overview

The Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge was completed on 1 July 1946, and replaced an earlier bridge that opened on 1 May 1889. Responsibility for maintenance of the bridge now resides with Sydney Trains, an organisation that commenced operations on 1 July 2013. Prior to this date RailCorp was responsible for asset management and maintenance of the bridge.

A maintenance plan for the bridge specified inspection frequencies for all aspects of the bridge and track construction. In particular, it specified that an underwater examination of permanently underwater piers be conducted every six years. This plan was issued by RailCorp in December 2009, and is now subject to maintenance by The Asset Standards Authority, an agency of Transport for NSW.

An underwater inspection in May 2013 indicated that the downstream pile of Pier 2 required attention. To date no repairs to this pier have taken place.

This matter was brought to the attention of the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure in September 2015. As a consequence the Minister requested that the Chief Investigator conduct a formal investigation to establish the facts in relation to the management of the condition of the bridge and to consider the following issues:

1. How has Sydney Trains assured itself that the bridge is, and continues to be safe?
2. Did the process followed by Sydney Trains in managing the procurement of the remedial works adequately consider the ongoing safety of the bridge?
3. Has the delay to issuing the tender for repairs compromised the safety of the structure?
4. What further arrangements could be considered to ensure ongoing confidence in the management of the remedial works?
5. Examine the wider system of decision making processes in Sydney Trains that captures, considers and manages asset and infrastructure safety.
6. What improvements could be made to the above process followed by Sydney Trains?

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference require OTSI's Investigating Officer to:

- a. address the issues raised in the Minister's request,
- b. 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 and Infrastructure 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.