



Office of Transport Safety Investigations

RAIL SAFETY INVESTIGATION

INTERIM FACTUAL STATEMENT

(Revised 13 November 2015)

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.

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.

OTSI's investigators have sought and obtained a range of information from all Directly Involved Parties (DIPs) and are undertaking detailed analysis of this information.

While this analysis has been proceeding:

- Three of the DIPs have undertaken separate independent processes to satisfy themselves that the bridge remains safe for ongoing use.
- Two independent inspections have been undertaken, and the resulting reports confirm that the load rating of the bridge was still adequate to carry existing rail traffic.
- While there has been deterioration of a bridge support pier since inspections and measurements in 2014, the bridge remains safe for use in the short term.
- The independent reports recommended that repairs be carried out within six months and that the condition of the bridge be regularly monitored in the intervening period.
- One report further recommended that if the repairs could not be completed within six months, temporary measures should be adopted to prevent further deterioration until repairs took place.
- The national rail regulator was satisfied that Sydney Trains was aware of the risks relating to the pier and was managing those issues. They concluded that there are no immediate safety issues relating to the structure of the bridge.

On the basis of this information, OTSI is satisfied that there is no immediate risk associated with the ongoing use of the bridge.

As OTSI's investigations are systemic in nature, OTSI will also be examining the following issues:

- Does the framework for management of maintenance adequately and appropriately establish the necessary accountabilities?
- Are there systems in place to review and maintain the quality and effectiveness of asset maintenance.
- Do the contractual arrangements between the agencies involved in asset management adequately address the safety issues?
- Are there satisfactory regulatory processes in place with oversight of rail infrastructure safety?

On the completion of OTSI's investigation and prior to release of the report, all DIPs will be consulted and will be afforded the opportunity to comment on the Draft report.

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.