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THE OFFICE OF
TRANSPORT
SAFETY
INVESTIGATION

safe and reliable transport services for new south wales



Rail Safety Investigation Report

22 December 2004

Derailment of Freight Train at Bethungra.

Interim Factual Statement

Factual Information

At approximately 20.05hrs on 22 December 2004, a freight train, operated by Freight Australia Limited¹, became derailed whilst descending the grade at Bethungra, on the main south line between Cootamundra and Junee in the Southern Region of NSW. The train consisted of four locomotives and 11 bulk cement wagons and was enroute from Berrima to Melbourne at the time of the incident.

The train crew observed a buckle in the track just prior to the incident and applied the emergency brakes. The train passed over the buckle with the four locomotives remaining on the track. However, 11 cement wagons derailed, with eight of the wagons toppling off the embankment and coming to rest on either side of the track.

All 11 wagons were severely damaged in the incident and the contents of one wagon spilled into a dry causeway when the wagon split open during the derailment. Approximately 200 metres of track was also destroyed.

The wheelsets, bogies and tank bodies from a number of other wagons also came to rest in close proximity to the opposite track, with the train crew taking immediate action to notify train control of the incident and stop trains in the area.

There were no injuries as a result of the derailment.

Disruption to both passenger and freight train services past the derailment site during the Christmas holiday period were minimised, using procedures which were introduced to allow train operations to continue on the opposite track.

¹ Freight Australia Limited is a subsidiary of Pacific National Limited



Photograph 1

Status of the Investigation

OTSI's investigation into the incident continues and is being assisted by Pacific National Limited and the Australian Rail Track Corporation.

The report of the completed investigation will be tabled in Parliament by the Minister for Transport Services as required by Section 68 of the Rail Safety Act.