



Office of Transport Safety Investigations

RAIL SAFETY INVESTIGATION

INTERIM FACTUAL STATEMENT

DERAILMENT OF PASSENGER SERVICE 312A THIRROUL

11 September 2006



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*, the Office 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. OTSI monitors the extent to which its recommendations have been accepted and acted upon through consultation with the relevant Transport Safety Regulator.

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

Level 17, 201 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Tel: (02) 9322 9200

PO Box A2616
Sydney South NSW 1235

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 5:32am on 11 September 2006, passenger service 312A, operated by RailCorp, derailed at Number 3 platform at Thirroul in NSW. Immediately prior to the incident, the train proceeded past a signal, WG 568D, which had indicated that 312A was not to proceed. Having failed to stop, 312A derailed 33 metres later on catch points deliberately positioned to arrest the movement of train under such circumstances, thereby reducing the prospect of a collision with another train.

The driver of the train, a Tangara with approximately 20 passengers onboard, reported that it was wet and blustery at the time and that he approached signal WG 568D with caution. However about 40 metres from the signal, he realised his train was not responding to normal braking techniques and therefore applied the emergency brakes. As 312A proceeded over the catch points, the leading 'car', from which the driver was operating, derailed all four leading wheels. However the four rear wheels stayed on the rails, as did all of the wheels on the following seven cars. There were no injuries resulting from the accident and only minor damage to the train and track.

OTSI's Duty Officer was notified of the derailment and an OTSI investigator was deployed to the site on the day of the incident to commence preliminary investigations.

RailCorp subsequently provided OTSI with a copy of its investigation report into the above incident. It provided a detailed description of the driver's actions and the results of analysis derived from information taken from the train's data loggers. The incident was attributed to reduced braking efficiency, caused by a combination of water and rust on the track. OTSI understands that there may have been previous incidents of this nature at Thirroul under like conditions.

The Chief Investigator determined that the accident warranted formal investigation pursuant to Section 45A of the *Transport Administration Act 1988* (NSW) and Section 67 of the *Rail Safety Act 2002* (NSW). The purpose of this investigation is to

establish why this incident occurred and to confirm whether there is a 'systemic' problem at Thirroul in wet conditions.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference established by the Chief Investigator require OTSI's Investigator in Charge to:

- identify the factors, both primary and contributory, which caused the incident
- assess the effectiveness of the emergency response following the incident
- identify any other SPADs (Signals passed at Danger) and/or derailments that may have occurred at Thirroul since 1995
- if there have been other SPADs and/or derailments at Thirroul, identify any commonalities, especially in the area of causation, between these occurrences and that which occurred on 11 September 2006
- if there have been other SPADs and/or derailments at Thirroul since 1995, comment on the effectiveness of the actions that were taken to prevent their recurrence
- identify the safety actions required to resolve any factors that are identified as causing or contributing to SPADs and/or derailments at Thirroul
- 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. Once completed, OTSI's investigation report will be tabled in Parliament by the Minister for Transport in accordance with Section 68 of the *Rail Safety Act 2002 (NSW)*. When the Report has been tabled, it will be published on OTSI's website.