

MEDIA RELEASE

24 December 2015.

'Be Rail Safe this Christmas'

At the top of TasRail's Christmas Wish List is a request for the public to observe its rail safety message.

TasRail's freight trains will continue to operate throughout the Christmas and New Year period and CEO Damien White is urging the community to stay safe by being alert for trains, always obeying level crossing signs and signals and by staying off railway tracks and rail bridges.

"The Christmas and New Year holiday period is typically a time when many people find themselves on the road travelling to visit family and friends or to take a holiday, so its highly likely that during the course of their travels, Tasmanians will interact with the railway", Mr White said. "We don't want to see anyone's festive season ruined by impatience or a poor decision".

Mr White revealed that so far during December, TasRail train drivers have reported 16 near miss incidents at level crossings. "Since 1 July 2015, the total is 72 – that's an alarming 67 per cent increase compared to the same period last year", he said.

"It only takes a minute or two for a train to pass through a crossing, but a split-second decision by a distracted or impatient motorist not to wait for the train could be tragic", Mr White said. "The outcome will also have a shattering impact on the lives of others, including innocent bystanders, the train driver and other rail staff as well as the first responders from police and emergency services".

Mr White suggested that waiting for the train to pass should be viewed as a welcome opportunity for a motorist to indulge in a quiet moment or to involve vehicle passengers or family members in a bit of fun. "Playing a game of Eye Spy or guessing the length of the train, the number of carriages, or counting how many lights are on the Christmas Train (Locomotive TR04) can be an entertaining way to stay safe.

TasRail is also concerned that too many people – young and old –continue to trespass inside the rail corridor by walking on the tracks or using a rail bridge as a recreational area.

"Railway tracks and bridges are incredibly dangerous places to be without the appropriate authorisation and protections in place", Mr White said. "People think they will hear the train approaching and have time to move away, but it's not always the case. Our new trains are quiet and are carrying more freight - if you happen to be on a rail bridge when the train approaches, there is no emergency exit and the consequences are likely to be fatal".

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“The best way to stay safe and enjoy the holiday season is to make sure you always respect rail signage by stopping for trains and staying well away from railway tracks, rail terminals and rail bridges”, Mr White said.

Media Opportunity:

- **CEO Damien White is available for interview in Launceston today at 11:30am today in Launceston**
- **Video of recent near miss incidents is also available on request**
- **Video of the TasRail Christmas Train (TR04) travelling from Burnie is also available on request**

Fast Facts:

- **For the 2014/15 financial year, TasRail train drivers reported a total of 85 near miss incidents involving vehicles. For the same period, there were 9 reported near miss incidents involving pedestrians. (Total of 94)**
- **Of the above 94 incidents last financial year– 72 occurred on the North West Coast (representing 76 per cent of all reports) 16 were in the North and 6 in the South.**
- **For the 2015/16 financial year to date (to 23 December) TasRail train drivers have reported a total of 72 near miss incidents – representing a 67 per cent increase compared to the same period last financial year. Of these incidents, 53 were on the North West Coast, 18 in the South and 1 in the North.**
- **For the first 23 days of December, there have been 16 reported near miss incidents. Of these, 13 have occurred on the North West Coast and 3 were in the South.**
- **For the 2014/15 financial year, TasRail reported 85 incidents of trespass in the rail corridor (including on rail bridges) – up 22 from the previous year.**

TasRail's Christmas Train:

- **With TR04 as the lead locomotive, the Christmas Train is scheduled to depart Boyer at 4pm today and is expected to arrive at Western Junction around 10pm before continuing on to Burnie.**

About TasRail:

TasRail is a State-owned Company, established on 1 December 2009 by an Act of the Tasmanian Parliament. The principal objectives of the business are set out in the Rail Company Act 2009 and require the Company to operate a rail business in Tasmania, effectively and efficiently and to operate its activities in accordance with sound commercial practice. With a workforce of around 240 men and women, Tasmania's current freight task is approximately 2.6 million tonnes per year – generating annual revenue in the order of \$37 million. TasRail conservatively estimates that the freight it transports by rail each year effectively removes the equivalent of 140,000 B-Double truck movements from the State's road network.

For more information:

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