



Australian Government  
Australian Transport Safety Bureau

# Safeworking irregularity

Glenrowan, Vic | 29 October 2013



Investigation

**ATSB Transport Safety Report**  
Rail Occurrence Investigation  
RO-2013-025  
Final – 23 January 2014

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#### **Addendum**

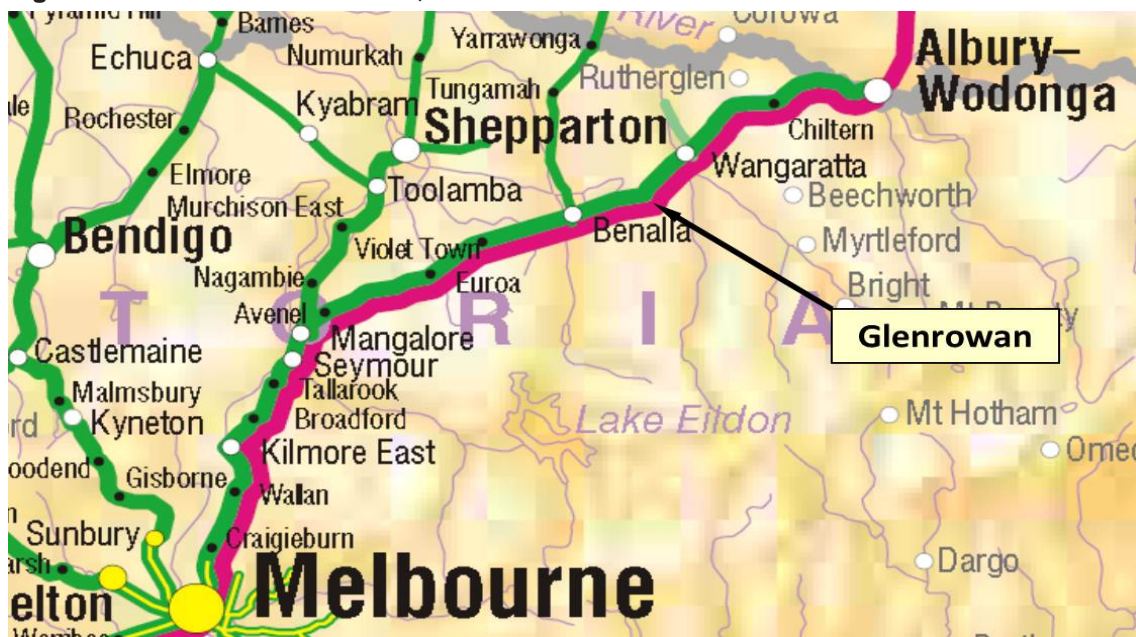
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## What happened

On 29 October 2013, the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) was undertaking a program of ballast remediation and drainage maintenance on the bidirectional west track between Benalla and Wangaratta, Victoria. This required Absolute Occupation of the west track and Track Force Protection on the east track due to the proximity of the track workers and their machinery. Worksite protection was put in place at 0644, which involved placing flagmen<sup>1</sup> and Audible Track Warning signals (ATWs)<sup>2</sup> either side of the worksite.

The worksite at Glenrowan used two radio channels for communications. One channel was used for safety critical communication between the flagmen and the track force coordinator, the second was used for worksite communication between the track workers, including the track force coordinator. The track workers relied on the track force coordinator for safety critical communication since they had no direct communication with the flagmen.

**Figure 1: Location of Glenrowan, Victoria**



Source: Geoscience Australia

At approximately 0730, V/Line passenger train 8610, travelling between Albury and Melbourne on the east track, stopped at Wangaratta to pick up passengers. The track force coordinator at Glenrowan was made aware of the train by the flagmen on the west track. The track force coordinator then instructed the flagmen on the east track to remove the ATWs and allow the train to pass the work site unrestricted. This was done without informing the work site supervisor or any of the track workers.

At about 0744, the outer flagman observed train 8610 and contacted the inner flagman to let her know that the train was approaching. The inner flagman attempted to contact the track force coordinator multiple times, but did not get a response. The track force coordinator was in conversation with the work site supervisor and not within earshot of either of his radios. The inner flagman then tried to alert the track force coordinator by whistle without success.

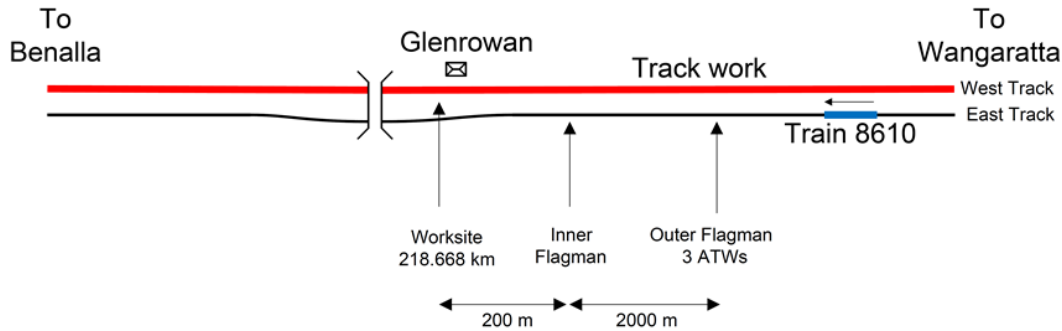
At about the same time, the work site supervisor observed train 8610 approaching and called out 'Train on' on the work site radio. The track workers also saw the train and took action to ensure

<sup>1</sup> The terms flagman/flagmen used in this report are not gender specific and are consistent with the ARTC rules.

<sup>2</sup> An Audible Track Warning signal is a device that explodes on impact used to attract the attention of drivers and track vehicle operators of the condition of the track ahead.

that they and their machines were clear of the east track. The driver of train 8610 did not notice anything unusual as the train passed through the worksite (without incident) at about 0746.

**Figure 2: Glenrowan location of track works and Track Force Working**



Note: Not to scale

After the incident, the work site supervisor took control of the site and, following an on-site assessment of the incident, called a halt to the works at Glenrowan. At 0900, the track force coordinator contacted the network controller to advise there had been an incident and that track protection on the east track at Glenrowan was lifted until further notice. The track force coordinator contacted the network controller again at 1030 to report the details of the near-miss incident at Glenrowan between track workers and train 8610.

The track force coordinator was tested for the presence of alcohol or other drugs which proved negative.

## Safety action

Whether or not the ATSB identifies safety issues in the course of an investigation, relevant organisations may proactively initiate safety action in order to reduce their safety risk. The ATSB has been advised of the following proactive safety action in response to this occurrence.

### **Australian Rail Track Corporation**

As a result of this occurrence, the Australian Rail Track Corporation has advised the ATSB that they are taking the following safety actions:

- A post-incident meeting was held with all BRP<sup>3</sup> personnel to discuss the incident and reinforce the necessity to follow procedures when providing track protection.
- The program manager instructed all site personnel that ATWs were to be left on track to warn of trains approaching worksites.
- Follow up training and recertification was provided regarding the relevant network safeworking rules.

## Safety message

The ATSB SafetyWatch highlights the broad safety concerns that come out of our investigation findings and from the occurrence data reported to us by industry. One of the safety concerns is safe work on rail

[www.atsb.gov.au/safetywatch/safe-work-on-rail.aspx](http://www.atsb.gov.au/safetywatch/safe-work-on-rail.aspx).



This occurrence demonstrates the importance of following procedures when providing protection to track workers. A track force coordinator must ensure that workers and their machinery are in a position of safety prior to removing any form of track protection, whether that be signals, flagmen, ATWs or signage.

<sup>3</sup> Ballast Rehabilitation Project

## General details

### Occurrence details

Date and time:	29 October 2013	
Occurrence category:	Incident	
Primary occurrence type:	Safeworking breach	
Location:	Glenrowan, Victoria	
	Latitude: 36° 27.831' S	Longitude: 146° 13.383' E

### Train details

Train operator:	V/Line	
Registration:	8610	
Type of operation:	Intrastate passenger	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	
Injuries:	Crew – 0	
Damage:	None	

## About the ATSB

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is an independent Commonwealth Government statutory agency. The ATSB is governed by a Commission and is entirely separate from transport regulators, policy makers and service providers. The ATSB's function is to improve safety and public confidence in the aviation, marine and rail modes of transport through excellence in: independent investigation of transport accidents and other safety occurrences; safety data recording, analysis and research; and fostering safety awareness, knowledge and action.

The ATSB is responsible for investigating accidents and other transport safety matters involving civil aviation, marine and rail operations in Australia that fall within Commonwealth jurisdiction, as well as participating in overseas investigations involving Australian registered aircraft and ships. A primary concern is the safety of commercial transport, with particular regard to fare-paying passenger operations.

The ATSB performs its functions in accordance with the provisions of the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003* and Regulations and, where applicable, relevant international agreements.

The object of a safety investigation is to identify and reduce safety-related risk. ATSB investigations determine and communicate the safety factors related to the transport safety matter being investigated.

It is not a function of the ATSB to apportion blame or determine liability. At the same time, an investigation report must include factual material of sufficient weight to support the analysis and findings. At all times the ATSB endeavours to balance the use of material that could imply adverse comment with the need to properly explain what happened, and why, in a fair and unbiased manner.

## About this report

Decisions regarding whether to conduct an investigation, and the scope of an investigation, are based on many factors, including the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited-scope, fact-gathering investigation was conducted in order to produce a short summary report, and allow for greater industry awareness of potential safety issues and possible safety actions.



## Investigation

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## Australian Transport Safety Bureau

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