

# RAIL SAFETY REGULATION SAFETY ALERT

## NOTICE TO ACCREDITED RAIL TRANSPORT OPERATORS

### THIS ADVICE IS EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

#### 03/11 – Track Blocking and Points Locking – Signalling Systems

### Background

A signalling system is designed to provide for the safe operation of rail traffic. The system however may not safeguard completely the additional activities that occur on the railway such as occupation by track workers and track work, movement of on-track vehicles, non-signalled moves by trains and protection of obstructions.

There have been a number of recent occurrences throughout Australia where these additional activities have not been adequately protected by the signalling system, sometimes leading to higher potential for derailment, collision and injury. These occurrences include:

- i. Complete protection of track workers and track work where track blocking has not been applied before the work commences, applied in the wrong location or inadvertently removed.
- ii. The operation of on-track vehicles (that do not effectively operate track circuits or axle counters or those that do effectively operate track circuits or axle counters but are travelling in a separated “convoy” style) without complete blocking protection or the locking of points within the route, to protect against them being altered in front of or under the movement.
- iii. Rail traffic moving into a section of track without the clearing of a signal (including setting back).

(Note: In occurrences ii and iii, the benefit of route locking offered by the signalling system may not be available in these circumstances.)

### Action

Rail transport operators are requested to initiate the following actions urgently:

- Make sure that risk assessments and risk registers are up to date and articulate the issues associated with the occurrences noted above.
- Review procedures within the safety management system and ensure adequate control measures are in place.
- Only use route queing and fleeting of signals when it will not interfere with or threaten the integrity of a signal section when associated with the occurrences noted above.
- Pay particular attention to:
  - self normalising points to ensure that they do not operate in front of or under traffic
  - blocking protection to ensure correct placement and not inadvertently removed.

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