



RTBU



NATIONAL MEMBER BULLETIN

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CHARGES LAID OVER KATHERINE LEVEL CROSSING COLLISION

Yesterday, Northern Territory Police released the details of charges that have been laid against a truck driver who caused a huge collision with a full-laden freight train in Katherine in June last year.

According to NT Police, the truck driver failed to observe the pre-warning light, level crossing, and boom gates as he approached the crossing.

Faced with insufficient room to bring the truck to a controlled stop, the driver attempted to accelerate across the tracks, resulting in a collision with a train.

The truck driver has now been issued a summons to appear in court charges that include recklessly endangering life/serious harm, reckless damage to property, driving dangerously, careless driving, driving using a handheld mobile device, and entering a level crossing when warning lights were active.

Police will allege the driver was distracted using a handheld mobile device immediately before the collision, in which four people were injured (including the truck driver).

The details of the charges are extremely concerning for workers in the rail industry.

When stop signs, flashing lights and boom gates still don't stop people from driving through boom gates, it's clear that the message on level crossing safety just isn't getting through.

The collision in Katherine could have been much worse. Luckily, everyone escaped with their lives – that time. But we saw at Bindarra on New Year's Eve, these collisions can be fatal.

NATIONAL LEVEL CROSSING SAFETY SUMMIT

Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) statistics show there are, on average, over 500 'near misses' at level crossings every year.

That's why the RTBU is calling for urgent national level crossing summit.

The current approach is not working, so we need to look at ramping up grade separations, stronger penalties for people who encroach on rail corridors, and other warning technologies.

Everything needs to be on the table.

Shayne Kummerfeld
ASSISTANT NATIONAL SECRETARY