

Train in 5m plunge - Local News - Cairns, QLD, Australia

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Off the rails: Cane bins dangle into the water from the Thomatis Creek cane line bridge and others lie submerged after a wheel came off a bin

MORE than 50 tonnes of cane and a dozen train bins plunged into ThomatisCreek north of Cairns when a wheel fell off a carriage yesterday.

The bins, worth tens of thousands of dollars, plunged from the rail bridge into the water more than 5m below just after midday, causing a spectacle for motorists travelling on the Captain Cook Highway.

The train was hauling about 70 bins along the track parallel to the highway from a nearby farm to the Redlynch depot when the wheel fell off.

The twisted metal bins hung from the bridge into the murky water, while a lone wheel sat in the centre of the mangled track on the bridge.

A Mulgrave Central Mill locomotive driver said he felt the train jerk and looked behind him to see the bins tumbling off the side of the bridge.

The locomotive and several bins had made it across the bridge before the incident. Mill cane supply and productivity manager Alan Hopkins said the cause of the accident was "almost certainly a burn-out" with an over-heated bearing box causing a wheel and axle to detach.

He said about 50 tonnes of cane was lost but the major loss was the bins.

"Some will be repaired and some won't be," he said.

"We are looking at some tens of thousands of dollars' damage to the bins."

Mr Hopkins said such accidents happened "from time to time".

A crane operator at the scene said the bins could only be extracted from the creek during low tide.

The bridge was expected to be out of action until this afternoon.

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