

# FATALITIES & INJURIES ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2021

FEBRUARY 2023

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	2
TOTAL FATALITIES AND INJURIES ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2021	3
INJURIES ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2021	4
SUSPECTED & ATTEMPTED SUICIDE ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2021	5

# INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by the TrackSAFE Foundation to increase knowledge and inform prevention activities in order to reduce fatalities, injuries and near misses on the Australian light rail network. A similar report is available for the Australian heavy rail network.

The TrackSAFE Foundation, established by the Australasian Railway Association and UGL in 2012, is Australia's only harm prevention charity focused on reducing deaths, injuries and near misses on the rail network. TrackSAFE also works to improve the wellbeing of rail employees.

Every life lost and injury on the light and heavy rail networks is a tragedy and the impacts on family, friends, communities, rail and recovery staff and witnesses can be profound. These incidents together with thousands of near hits each year can cause trauma and work-related stress and illness to rail and recovery staff. They also cause disruption and delays to hundreds of services each year impacting customers and economic efficiency.

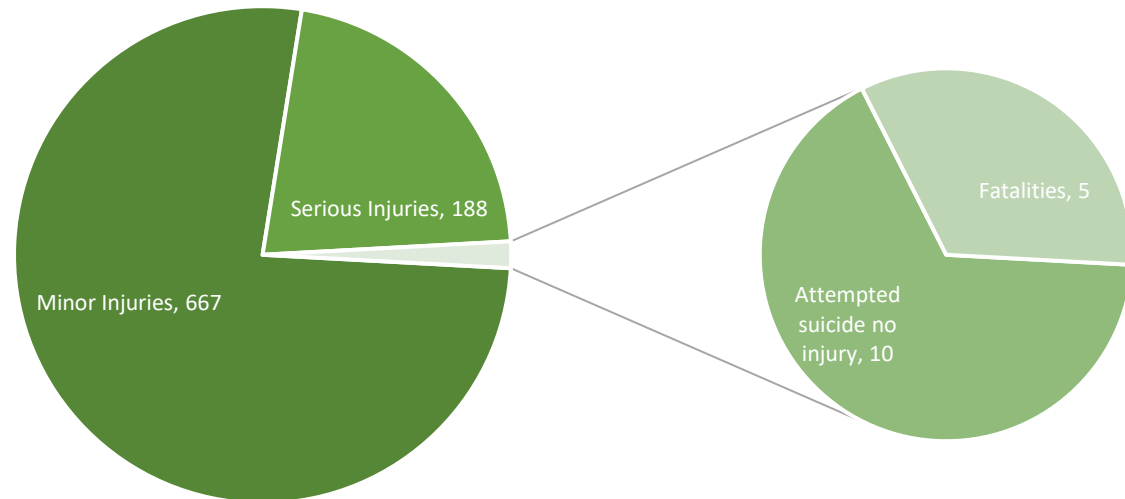
Working closely with rail organisations, the TrackSAFE Foundation is actively engaged in a wide range of rail safety and suicide prevention activities including public awareness campaigns, facilitation of the annual Rail Safety Week and knowledge sharing activities across the rail sector, the commissioning of new research, working with and advocacy to governments. More information on TrackSAFE's activities is available via its [website](#).

Light rail vehicles (trams) have been an important part of the public transport network in many of Australia's cities over the last century. However, with the increasing prominence and affordability of private vehicles, some of these networks were retired. But the last couple of decades has seen a renaissance and new light rail services.

Light rail vehicles have been operating continuously in Melbourne since 1906 and the Yarra Trams network is the largest operating urban light rail network in the world (250km). Light rail operations were closed in Sydney and Adelaide by the 1960s. In 1997 new light rail operations were opened in Sydney and subsequently extended to a 25km network and reintroduced in Adelaide (16km network) in 2020. The Gold Coast light rail (20km) was opened in 2014 and Newcastle (3km) and Canberra light rail (12km) in 2019. The Gold Coast and Canberra light rail networks are currently being extended and a new service will be opened in Parramatta NSW in 2024.

*Some people may find the content of this report confronting or distressing. The information included here places an emphasis on data, and as such, can appear to depersonalise the pain and loss behind the statistics. If this material raises concerns for you contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.*

# TOTAL FATALITIES AND INJURIES ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2021<sup>1</sup>



Between 2016 – 2021 there were 5 fatalities and 855 injuries plus 10 people who attempted suicide but were not injured. Most incidents occur in Melbourne where Yarra Trams operate a network of approximately 250km of track. There is currently 16 km of operational track in Adelaide, 25km in Sydney, 3km in Newcastle, 20km on the Gold Coast and 12km in Canberra.

Of the fatalities, 1 was the result of a fall on a light rail vehicle and 4 were incidents with pedestrians.

Most (62%) serious and minor injuries were the result of slips, trips and falls onboard or alighting or disembarking.

## STATE DISTRIBUTION



1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Notifiable Occurrences Category A or B January 2016 – July 2022. The requirements for operator reporting of notifiable occurrences are set out in the Reporting Requirements for Notifiable Occurrences. See [here](#) for information about notifiable occurrences to ONRSR

# INJURIES ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2021<sup>1</sup>

## SERIOUS INJURIES

61% of serious injury occurrences were as a result of slips, trips and falls alighting, disembarking or while travelling on the light rail. Most falls are in response to the driver applying the break to avoid a collision. 1 was the result of an attempted suicide. The remainder were as a result of various types of collisions between pedestrians, cyclists or vehicles and the light rail vehicle.

	ACT	NSW	QLD	SA	VIC	TOTAL
2016	0	0	1	1	39	41
2017	0	0	1	0	40	41
2018	0	0	1	0	33	34
2019	1	0	0	0	28	29
2020	0	0	0	2	21	23
2021	0	0	1	0	19	20
TOTAL	1	0	4	3	180	188

## MINOR INJURIES

62% of minor injury occurrences were as a result of slips, trips and falls alighting, disembarking or while travelling on the light rail. Most falls are in response to the driver applying the break to avoid a collision. 2 were the result of an attempted suicide. The remainder were as a result of collisions between pedestrians, cyclists or vehicles and the light rail vehicle.

	ACT <sup>2</sup>	NSW	QLD	SA	VIC	TOTAL
2016	0	0	12	13	99	124
2017	0	0	14	12	114	140
2018	1	3	8	5	116	133
2019	5	9	2	10	109	135
2020	1	21	1	5	37	65
2021	1	11	4	9	45	70
TOTAL	8	44	41	54	520	667

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Notifiable Occurrences Category A or B January 2016 – July 2022. The requirements for operator reporting of notifiable occurrences are set out in the Reporting Requirements for Notifiable Occurrences. See [here](#) for information about notifiable occurrences to ONRSR
2. 2018 incident was during commissioning. Passenger services commenced April 2019.

# ATTEMPTED SUICIDE ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2021<sup>1</sup>

	ACT	NSW	QLD	SA	VIC	TOTAL
2016						0
2017					2	2
2018		1				1
2019				1	1	2
2020		1		1		2
2021				1	5	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>

13 people attempted suicide on the light rail network between 2016-2021. 1 incident resulted in serious injuries (Victoria), 2 incidents resulted in minor injuries (Victoria) and in 10 incidents there were no injuries. There were no fatalities that were suspected suicides.

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Notifiable Occurrences Category A or B January 2016 – July 2022. The requirements for operator reporting of notifiable occurrences are set out in the Reporting Requirements for Notifiable Occurrences. See [here](#) for information about notifiable occurrences to ONRSR

TrackSAFE Foundation  
[www.tracksafefoundation.com.au](http://www.tracksafefoundation.com.au)  
[info@tracksafefoundation.com.au](mailto:info@tracksafefoundation.com.au)

The logo for TrackSAFE Foundation features a vertical green bar on the left side. To the right of the bar, the word "TrackSAFE" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with "SAFE" in green. Below "TrackSAFE", the word "Foundation" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**TrackSAFE**  
**Foundation**