

A decorative graphic at the top of the page. On the left, a dark green train with white accents is shown in profile, moving from left to right. On the right, a dark green silhouette of a city skyline is visible, with a white fence-like structure in front of it. The background of the entire page is a solid dark green.

FATALITIES, INJURIES AND NEAR MISSES ON THE NEW SOUTH WALES HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2001-2022

JULY 2023

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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 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 rail network 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. The average annual economic burden of railway safety incidents in Australia during the period 2007-2015 was estimated to be approximately \$360.1 million¹.

Working closely with rail organisations, the TrackSAFE Foundation is actively engaged in a wide range of rail safety activities including public awareness campaigns and facilitation of the annual Rail Safety Week. To prevent suicides on the rail network, it advocates for fencing and other barriers to reduce access to the rail corridor, encourages individuals to seek help before and at the time of crisis and will launch Suicide Awareness Training for rail staff in September 2023. It also promotes the responsible reporting of suspected and attempted suicides by the media. In partnership with Lifeline Australia, TrackSAFE implements public awareness campaigns to encourage individuals to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 whether they are in crisis or just needing someone to talk to. The [Pause.Call.Be Heard](#) signage is used widely in the rail corridor as well as being delivered digitally in bursts to those in and near the corridor.

This report complements an Australia wide report that is available [here](#).

More information on TrackSAFE's activities is available via its [website](#).

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.

1. RISSB 2015 AS 7644. 2015. Rail Corridor Access Infrastructure Standard p4.

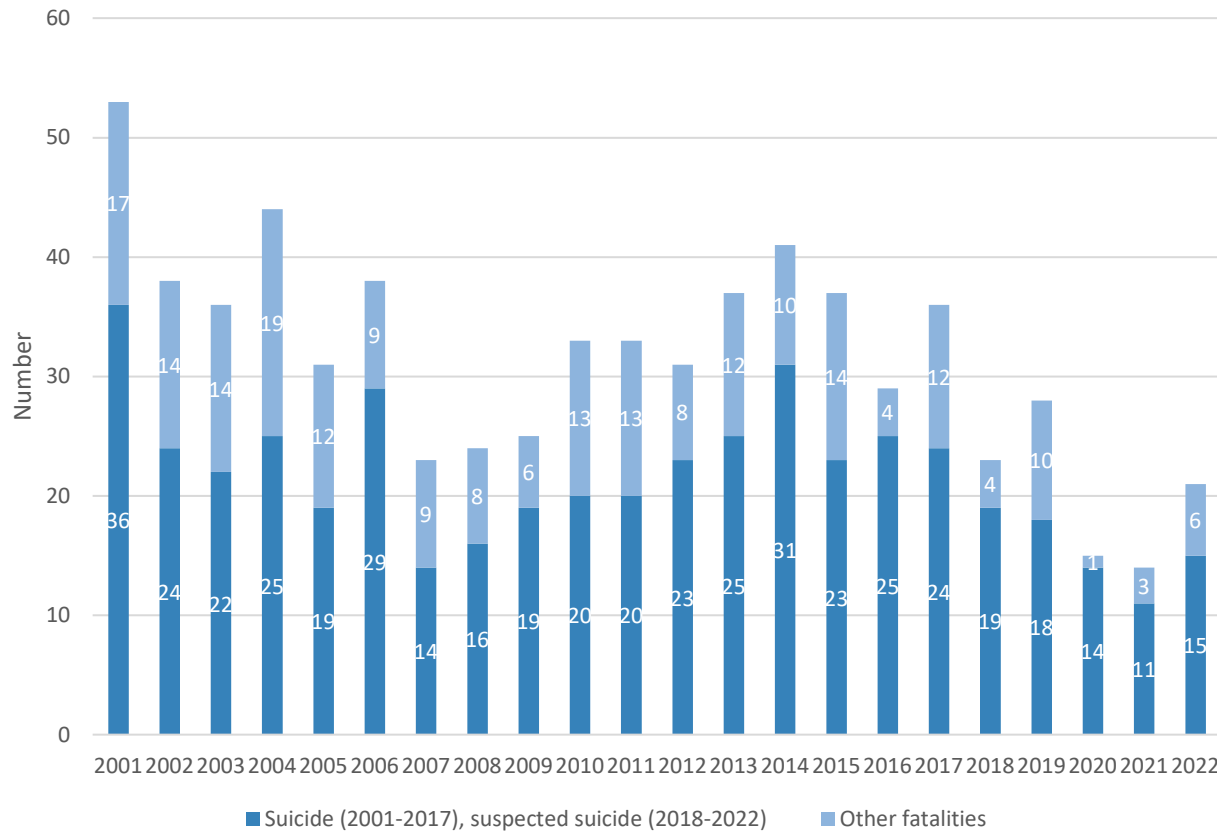
NOTES ON THE DATA IN THIS REPORT

- Fatality, injury and near miss data in this report has been sourced from either the National Coronial Information System (NCIS) or the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR).
- Where data is described as 'suicide', the data has been sourced from a report commissioned by the TrackSAFE Foundation from the NCIS for the period 2000-2017. Information about the limitations of this data can be provided by TrackSAFE.
- Where a fatality is described as 'suspected suicide', the data has been obtained by ONRSR and includes incidents notified to the Regulator by rail operators as required by the Rail Safety National Law National Regulations. These incidents are notified to ONRSR shortly after the incident. The Coroner may make a different determination about the cause of death.
- The number of suicides in 2016 & 2017 (76 & 82 respectively) as determined by Coroners' and included in the NCIS report is lower than the suspected suicides reported in the ONRSR database (77 & 94 respectively).
- There is some variability in the time period used for the analysis included in this report due to the form and availability of data.
- Some of the information presented in this report for 2016-2022 has been interpreted and coded from free-form text in the ONRSR database by TrackSAFE. This includes sex, location and action.
- TrackSAFE has calculated the railway suicide/suspected suicide rate per 100,000 population using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) annual June population estimates. The ABS advises that care should be taken comparing 2019 suicide data with previous years as some ABS data has been subject to quality improvement processes and revisions.
- Two amendments were made to the ONRSR occurrence database by TrackSAFE. A 2017 Victorian tram incident that resulted in a serious injury is excluded and suspected suicide fatality in NSW in 2016 was misclassified as a minor injury.
- On 1/7/2022 The definition of serious injury has changed and resulted in a slight decrease of serious injuries compared to previous years. On the same date the definition of Near Miss/Near Hit has changed and now only requires incidents to be reported where a collision has only been narrowly avoided by chance and there was a high chance of collision if circumstances were slightly different. This resulted in a decrease of "Near Miss" incidents compared to previous years.

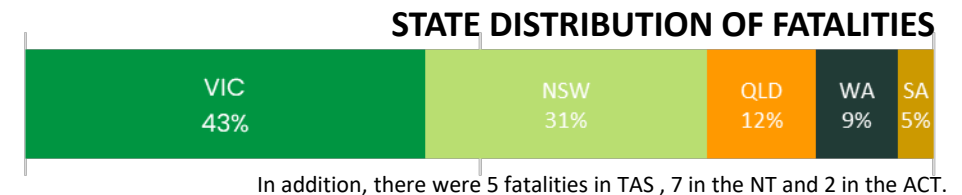
SUMMARY

- Between 2001-2022 there were 2,250 fatalities - 1,620 suicides or suspected suicides and 630 other fatalities on the Australian heavy rail network. This is a total annual average of 102 fatalities per year (74 suicides & suspected suicides and 28 other fatalities), or almost 2 each week. Most occur in Victoria (43%) followed by New South Wales (31%), Queensland (12%), Western Australia (9%) and South Australia (5%) and 7 in the Northern Territory, 5 in Tasmania and 2 in the Australian Capital Territory.
- Between 2001-2022 there were 690 fatalities - 472 suicides or suspected suicides and 218 other fatalities on the NSW heavy rail network. This is a total annual average of 31 fatalities per year (21 suicides & suspected suicides and 10 other fatalities), or almost 3 per month.
- Since 2016 rail operators have been required to report to ONRSR occurrences – be they fatalities, injuries or near misses in accordance with the National Rail Safety National Law. Between 2016-2022 in NSW there were:
 - a total of 369 fatalities, injuries and attempted suicides with no injuries reported on ONRSR, an average of 53 per year.
 - 160 fatalities including 127 (79%) suspected suicides.
 - 152 attempted suicides. There are likely to have been many more attempted suicides and threats of self-harm that did not meet the regulatory reporting threshold.
 - 26 fatalities and 34 injuries to trespassers. In addition, there were 1,715 near misses with trespassers, an average of 245 per year. There are likely to have been many more near misses that did not meeting the regulatory reporting threshold.
 - 6 fatalities and 22 injuries as a result of collisions with a road vehicles and pedestrians at a level crossing. In addition, there were 913 near misses at level crossings, an average of 130 per year. There are likely to have been many more near misses that did not meeting the regulatory reporting threshold.

FATALITIES ON THE NEW SOUTH WALES HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2001-2022^{1,2,3}



In this period there were 690 fatalities – 472 (68%) suicides or suspected suicides and 218 (32%) other fatalities. This is a total annual average of 31 fatalities per year (21 suicides & suspected suicides and 10 other fatalities), or almost 3 per month.

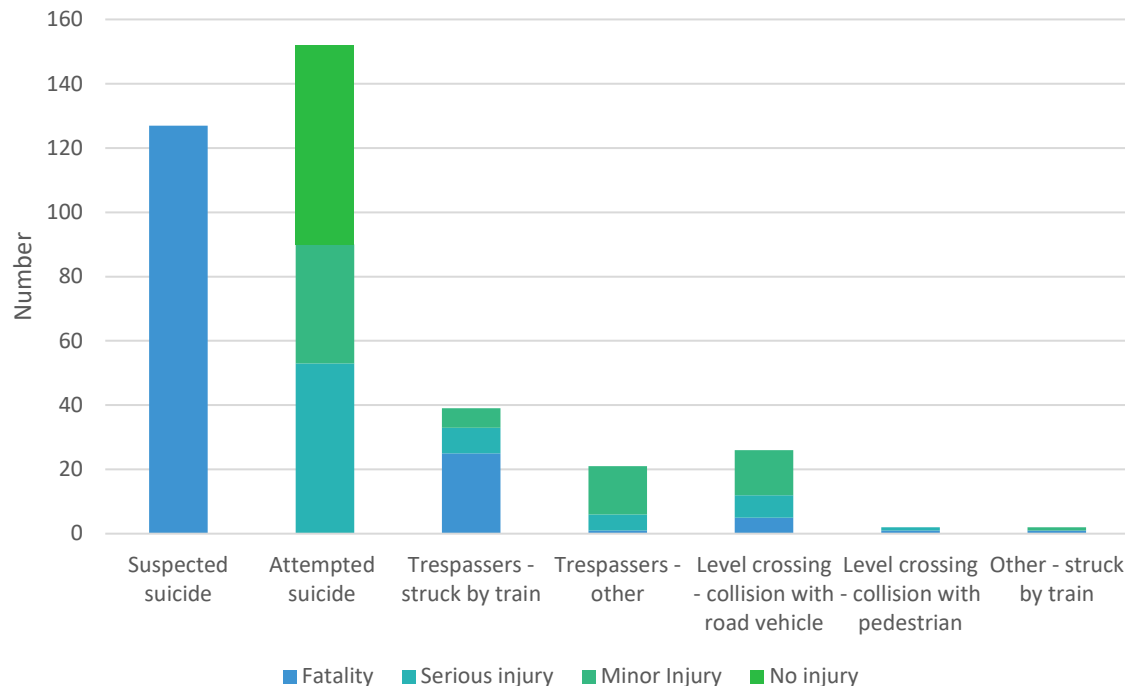


1. National Coronial Information System, 2020 Intentional Self-harm deaths at Australian railway locations 2000–2017, (DR20-31 and DR20-31A), November, Melbourne Australia (for 2001-2017 suicide data), National Coronial Information System, 2021, Non-intentional self-harm deaths at Australian railway locations 2000-2017 (DR20-43), February, Melbourne Australia (for 2001-2017 other fatality data).
2. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 2022 (for 2018-2021 data). 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
3. NCIS report less suicides in 2016 & 2017 compared to ONRSR suspected suicides (76 and 82 report by NCIS for 2016 and 2017 respectively compared to 77 and 94 suspected suicides reported by ONRSR).

FATALITIES & INJURIES BY CAUSE ON THE NEW SOUTH WALES HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

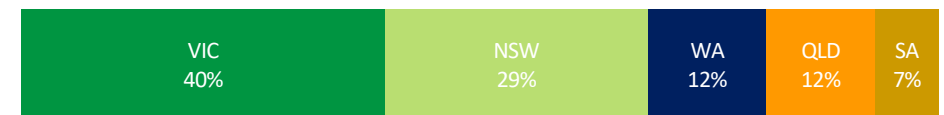
In this period there were:

- 369 fatalities, injuries and attempted suicides with no injury reported to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, an average of 53 per year.
- 80% of all fatalities were suspected suicides.



	Fatality	Serious injury	Minor Injury	No injury	Total
Suspected suicide	127				127
Attempted suicide		53	37	62	152
Trespassers - struck by train	25	8	6		39
Trespassers - other	1	5	15		21
Level Xing - collision with road vehicle	5	7	14		26
Level Xing - collision with pedestrian	1	1	0		2
Other – struck by train	1	0	1		2
Total	160	74	73	62	369

STATE DISTRIBUTION OF OCCURENCES



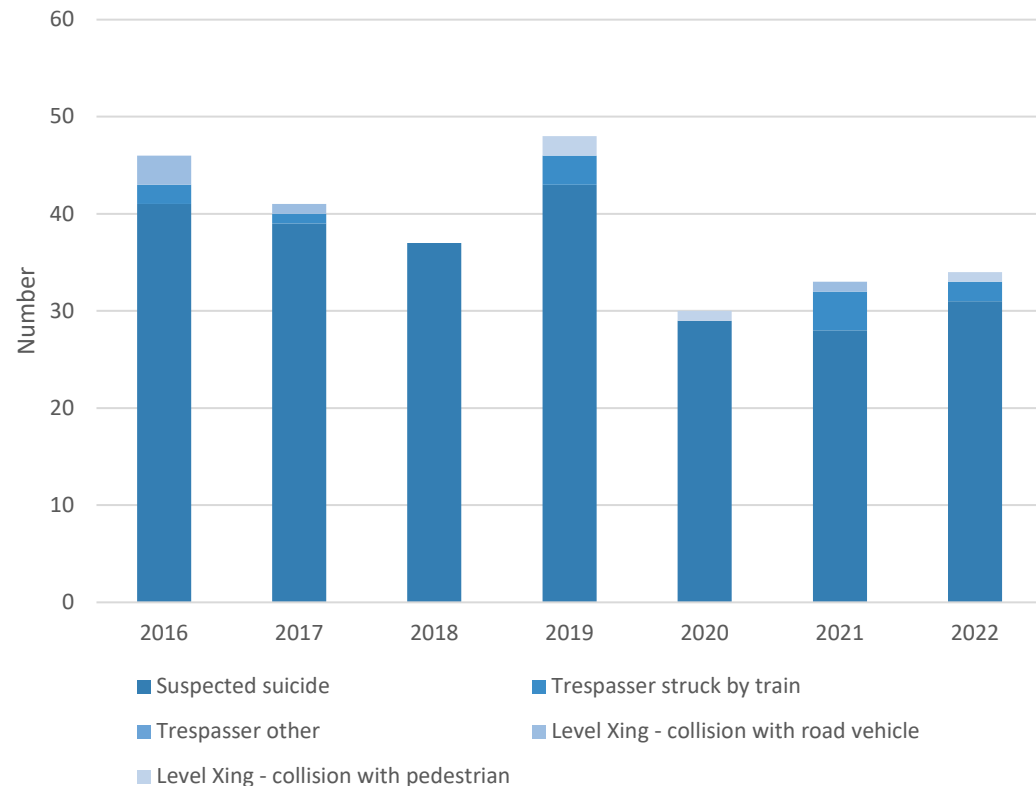
There were 2 injury incidents in NT, 1 in TAS and 0 in ACT

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 The definition of serious injury has changed and resulted in a slight decrease of serious injuries compared to previous years.

Note: NCIS report less suicides in 2016 & 2017 compared to ONRSR suspected suicides (76 and 82 report by NCIS for 2016 and 2017 respectively compared to 77 and 94 suspected suicides reported by ONRSR). National Coronial Information System, 2020 Intentional Self-harm deaths at Australian railway locations 2000–2017, (DR20-31 and DR20-31A), November, Melbourne Australia

FATALITIES ON THE NEW SOUTH WALES HEAVY RAIL NETWORK BY YEAR & CAUSE 2016-2022¹

In this period there were 160 fatalities reported to ONRSR, an average of 23 per year.



	Suspected suicide	Trespasser struck by train	Trespasser other	Level Xing - collision with road vehicle	Level Xing - collision with pedestrian	Other- struck by train	TOTAL
2016	23	4	0	0	0	0	27
2017	27	3	0	1	1	0	32
2018	19	2	1	1	0	0	23
2019	18	8	0	2	0	0	28
2020	14	1	0	0	0	0	15
2021	11	2	0	1	0	0	14
2022	15	5	0	0	0	1	21
TOTAL	127	25	1	5	1	1	160

STATE DISTRIBUTION OF FATALITIES



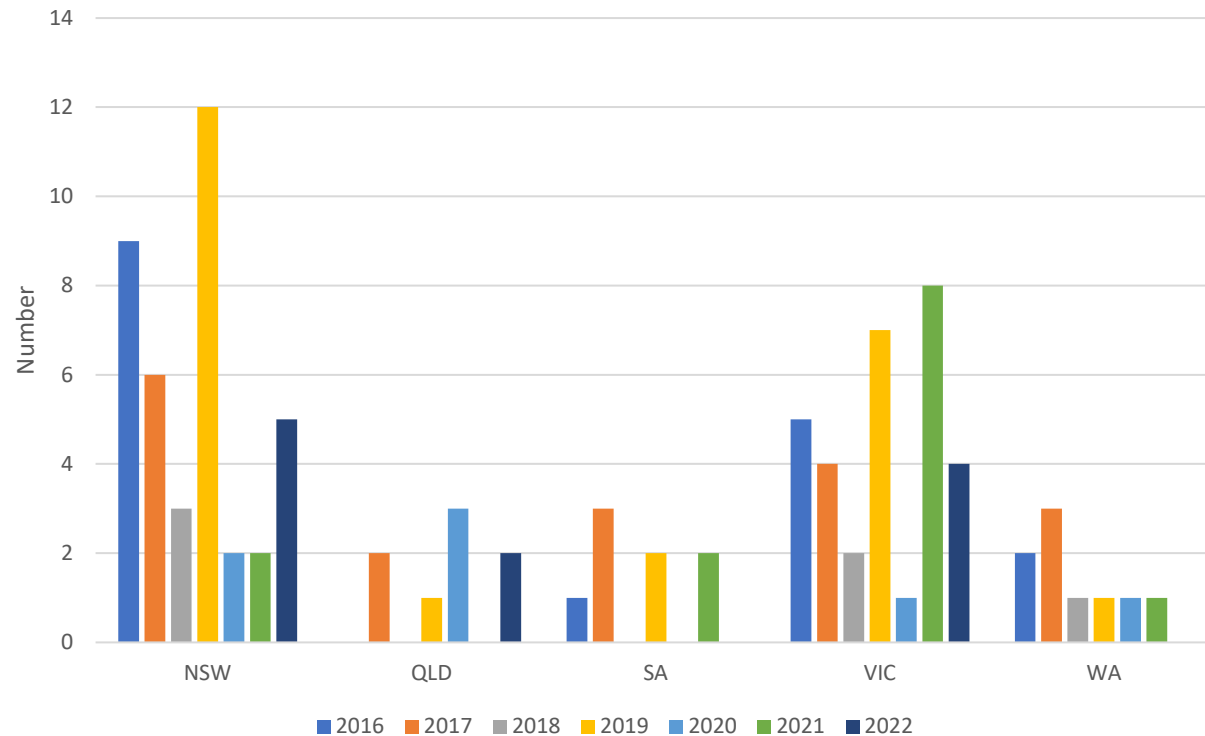
In addition, there was 1 fatality in TAS. There were no fatalities in NT & ACT.

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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.

Note: NCIS report less Australian suicides in 2016 & 2017 compared to ONRSR suspected suicides (76 and 82 reported by NCIS for 2016 and 2017 respectively compared to 77 and 94 suspected suicides reported by ONRSR). National Coronial Information System, 2020 Intentional Self-harm deaths at Australian railway locations 2000–2017, (DR20-31 and DR20-31A), November, Melbourne Australia

TRESPASSER STRUCK BY TRAIN ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

In this period there were 96 trespassers struck by a train resulting in 50 fatalities, 24 serious injuries and 22 minor injuries.



	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	VIC	WA	TOTAL
2016	9	1	0	1	5	2	18
2017	6	0	2	3	4	3	18
2018	3	0	0	0	2	1	6
2019	12	0	1	2	7	1	23
2020	2	0	3	0	1	1	7
2021	2	0	0	2	8	1	13
2022	5	0	2	0	4	0	11
TOTAL	39	1	8	8	31	9	96

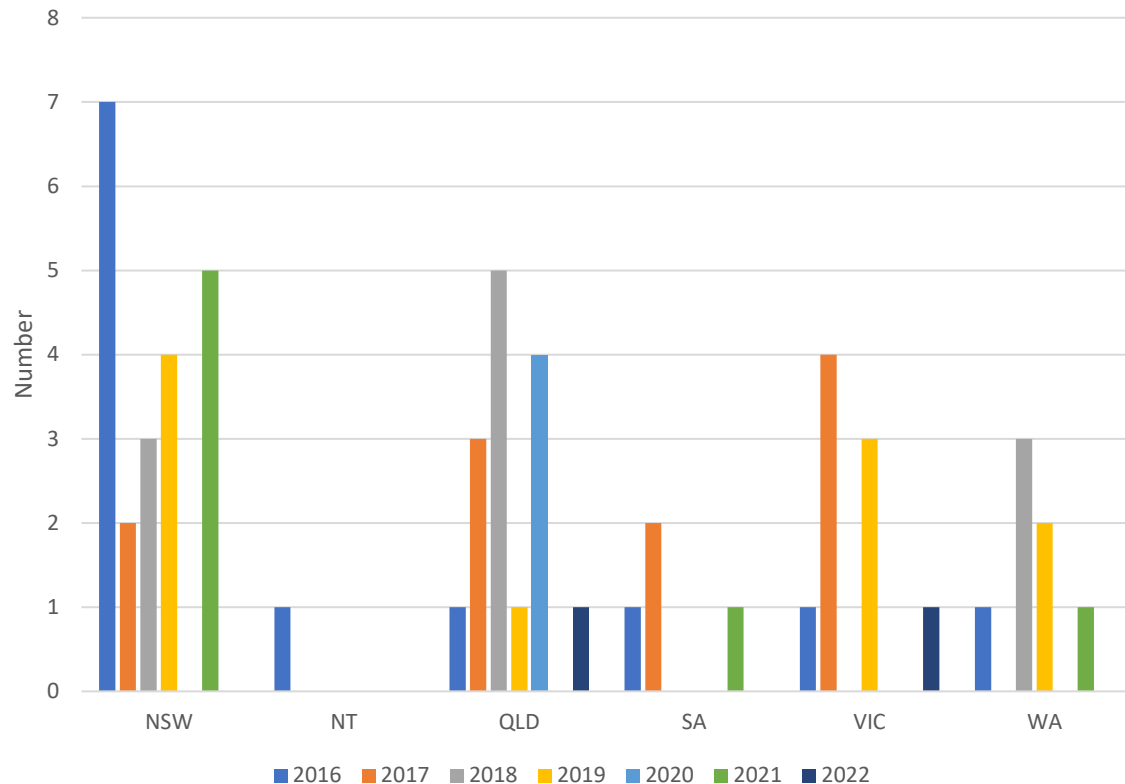
There were no incidents in the ACT or TAS.

	Fatality	Serious injury	Minor injury	TOTAL
2016	8	6	4	18
2017	8	3	7	18
2018	3	1	2	6
2019	13	7	3	23
2020	2	3	2	7
2021	7	3	3	13
2022	9	1	1	11
TOTAL	50	24	22	96

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of serious injury changed potentially reducing reported serious injuries compared to previous years.

TRESPASSER - OTHER ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

In this period there were 57 other trespasser incidents resulting in 3 fatalities, 22 serious injuries and 32 minor injuries.



	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	VIC	WA	TOTAL
2016	7	1	1	1	1	1	12
2017	2	0	3	2	4	0	11
2018	3	0	5	0	0	3	11
2019	4	0	1	0	3	2	10
2020	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
2021	5	0	0	1	0	1	7
2022	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
TOTAL	21	1	14	4	8	7	57

There were no incidents in the ACT or TAS.

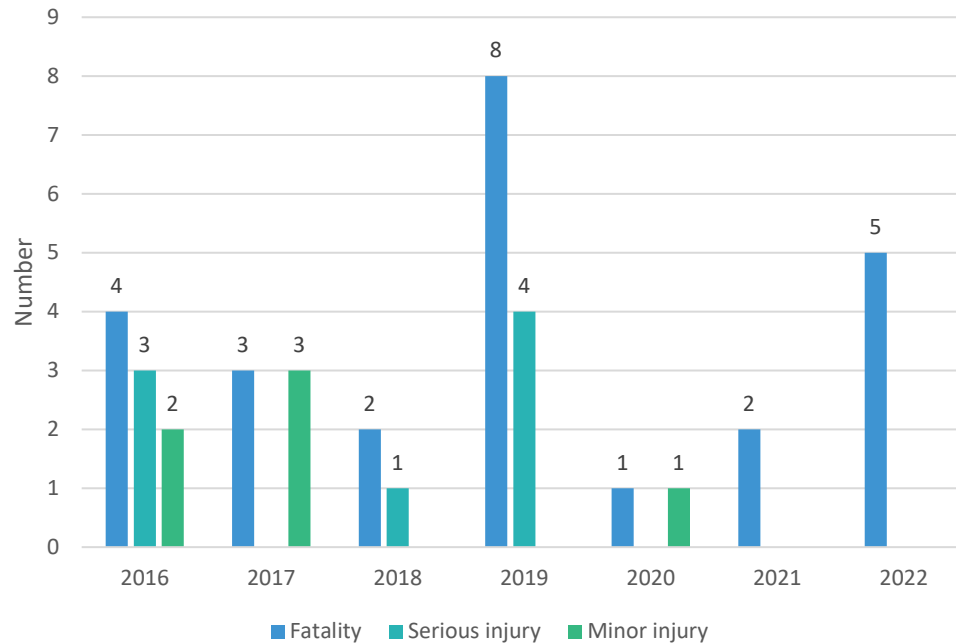
	Fatality	Serious injury	Minor injury	TOTAL
2016	1	6	5	12
2017	1	5	5	11
2018	1	5	5	11
2019	0	2	8	10
2020	0	2	2	4
2021	0	1	6	7
2022	0	1	1	2
TOTAL	3	22	32	57

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of serious injury changed potentially reducing reported serious injuries.

TOTAL TRESPASS OCCURENCES ON THE NEW SOUTH WALES HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

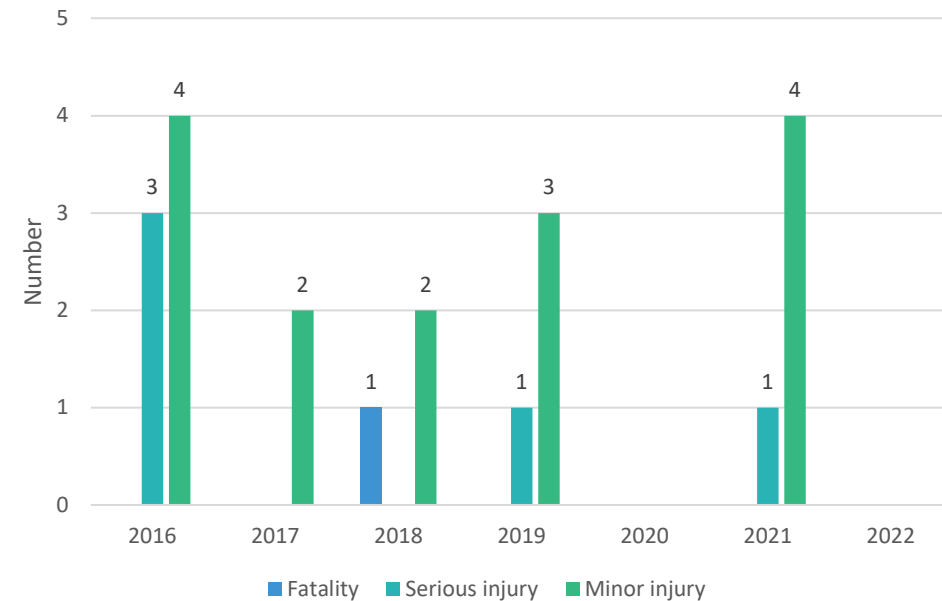
TRESPASSER STRUCK BY TRAIN

In this period there were 39 trespassers struck by a train resulting in 25 fatalities, 8 serious injuries and 6 minor injuries.



TRESPASSER OTHER INCIDENT

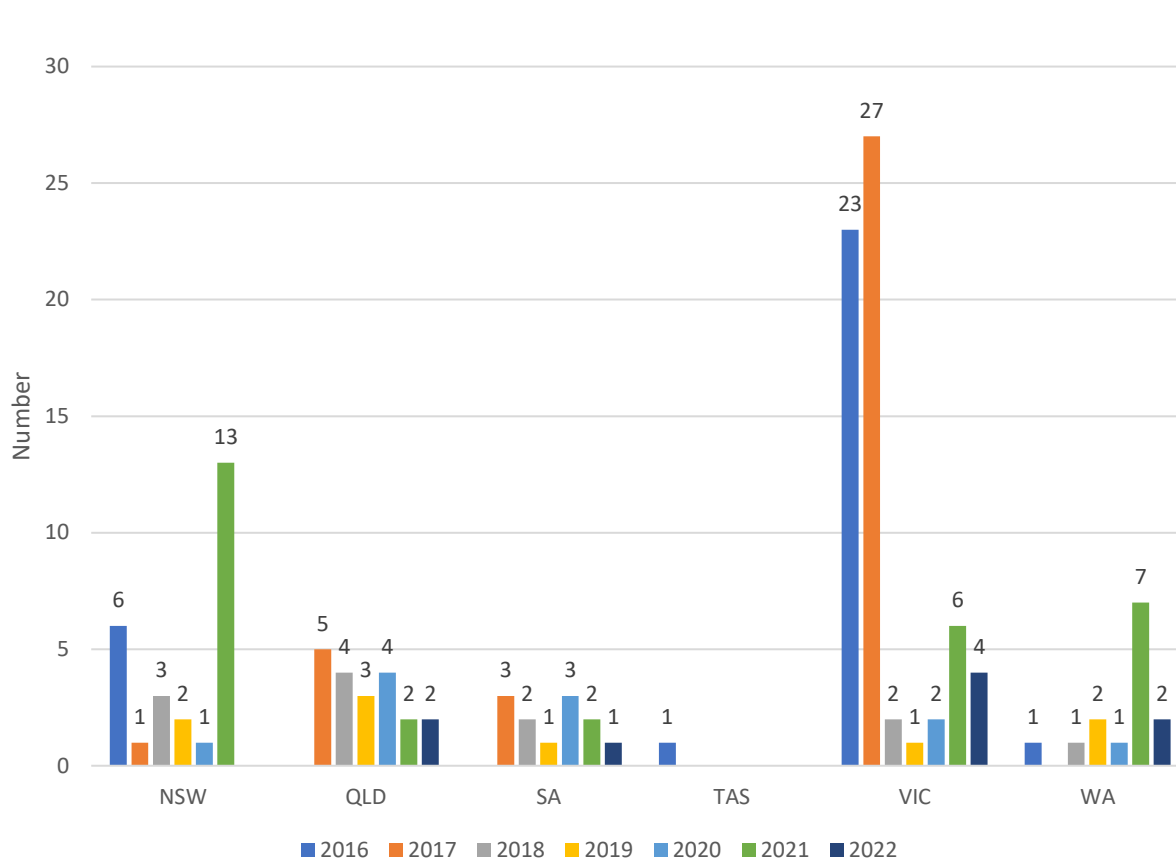
In this period there were 21 other trespasser incidents resulting in 1 fatality, 5 serious injuries and 15 minor injuries.



1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of serious injury changed potentially reducing reported serious injuries compared to previous years.

LEVEL CROSSING – COLLISION WITH A ROAD VEHICLE ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

In this period there were 20 fatalities and 118 injuries as a result of road vehicle collisions at a level crossing.



	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	TOTAL
2016	6	0	0	1	23	1	31
2017	1	5	3	0	27	0	36
2018	3	4	2	0	2	1	12
2019	2	3	1	0	1	2	9
2020	1	4	3	0	2	1	11
2021	13	2	2	0	6	7	30
2022	0	2	1	0	4	2	9
TOTAL	26	20	12	1	65	14	138

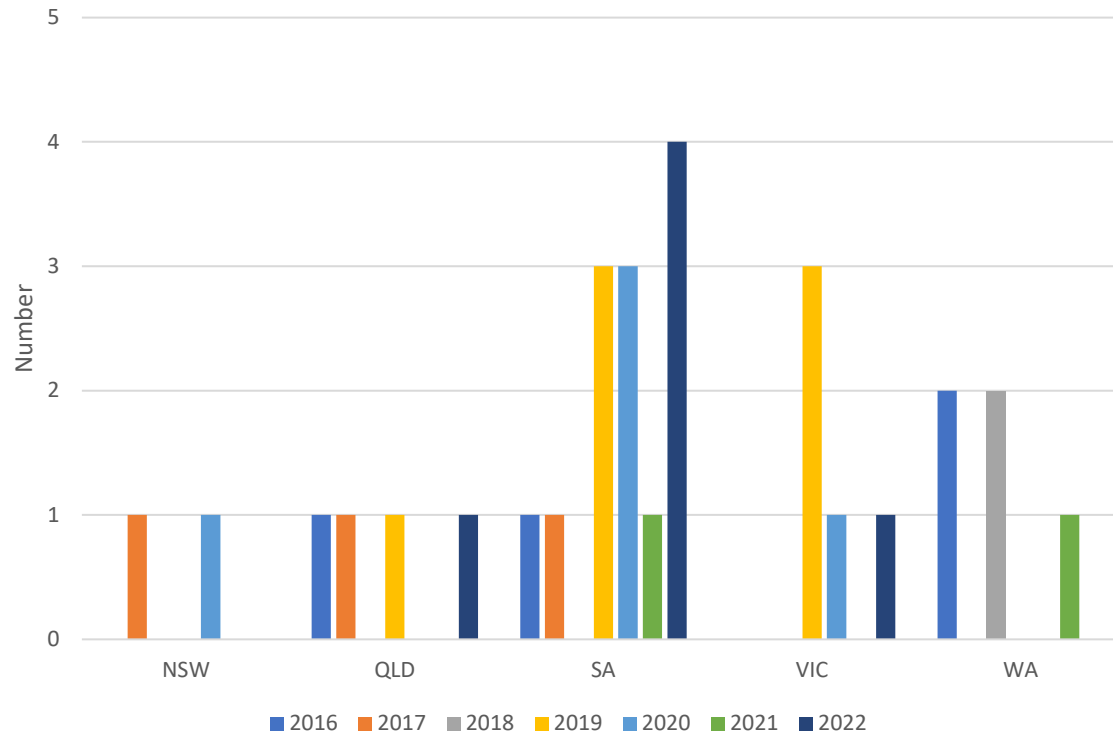
There were no incidents in the ACT or NT.

	Fatality	Serious injury	Minor injury	TOTAL
2016	3	3	25	31
2017	3	3	30	36
2018	3	4	5	12
2019	2	1	6	9
2020	2	2	7	11
2021	5	7	18	30
2022	2	2	5	9
TOTAL	20	22	96	138

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of serious injury changed potentially reducing reported serious injuries compared to previous years.

LEVEL CROSSING – COLLISION WITH A PEDESTRIAN ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

In this period there were 13 fatalities and 16 injuries as a result of collisions with a pedestrian at a level crossing.



	NSW	QLD	SA	VIC	WA	TOTAL
2016	0	1	1	0	2	4
2017	1	1	1	0	0	3
2018	0	0	0	0	2	2
2019	0	1	3	3	0	7
2020	1	0	3	1	0	5
2021	0	0	1	0	1	2
2022	0	1	4	1	0	6
TOTAL	2	4	13	5	5	29

There were no incidents in the ACT, NT or TAS.

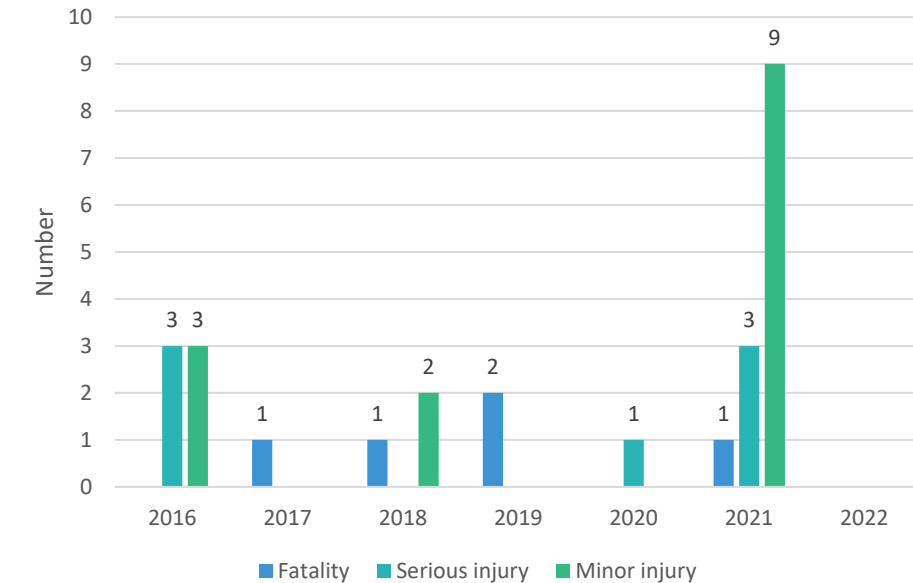
	Fatality	Serious injury	Minor injury	TOTAL
2016	0	3	1	4
2017	1	1	1	3
2018	1	1	0	2
2019	3	2	2	7
2020	3	2	0	5
2021	1	1	0	2
2022	4	2	0	6
TOTAL	13	12	4	29

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of serious injury changed potentially reducing reported serious injuries compared to previous years.

LEVEL CROSSING OCCURENCES ON THE NEW SOUTH WALES HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

COLLISION WITH A ROAD VEHICLE

In this period there were 5 fatalities, 7 serious injuries and 14 minor injuries as a result of road vehicle collisions at a level crossing.



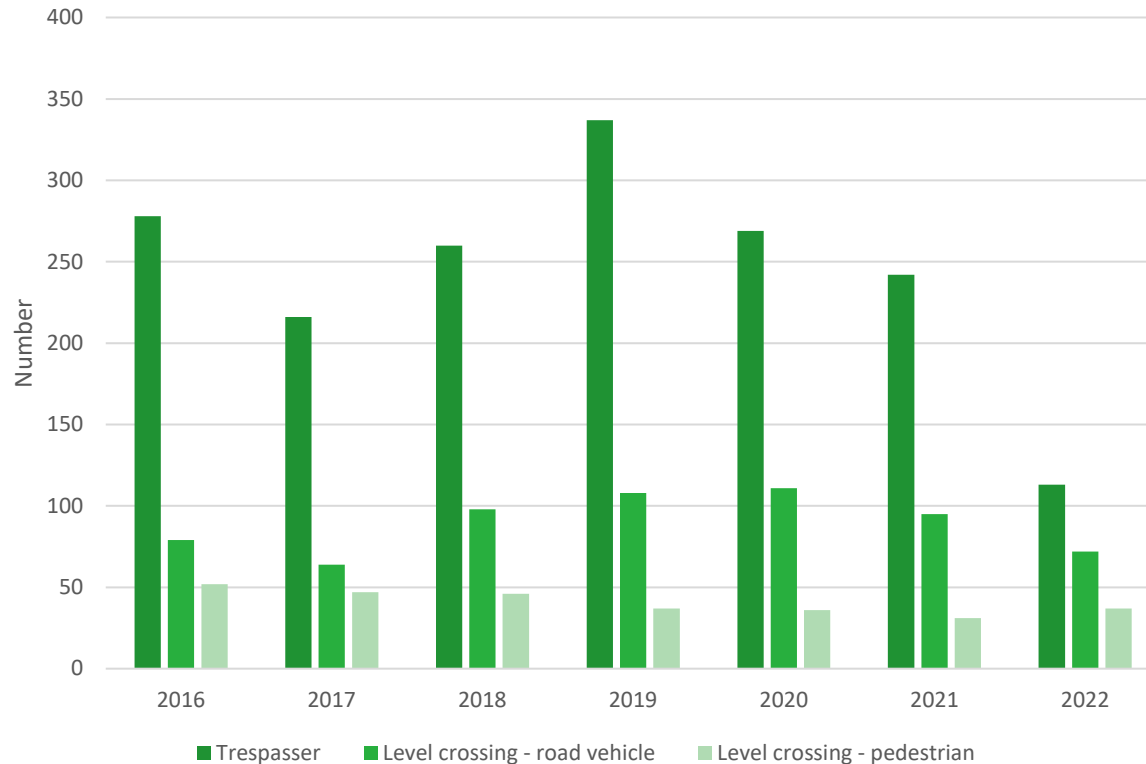
COLLISION WITH A PEDESTRIAN

In this period there was 1 fatality (2017) and 1 serious injury (2020) as a result of collisions with a pedestrian at a level crossing.

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of serious injury changed potentially reducing reported serious injuries compared to previous years.

NEAR MISS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS AND WITH TRESPASSERS ON THE NEW SOUTH WALES HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

In this period there were a total of 2,628 near misses (an average of 375 per year), 1,715 with trespassers, 672 at a level crossing with a road vehicle and 286 at a level crossing with pedestrians.

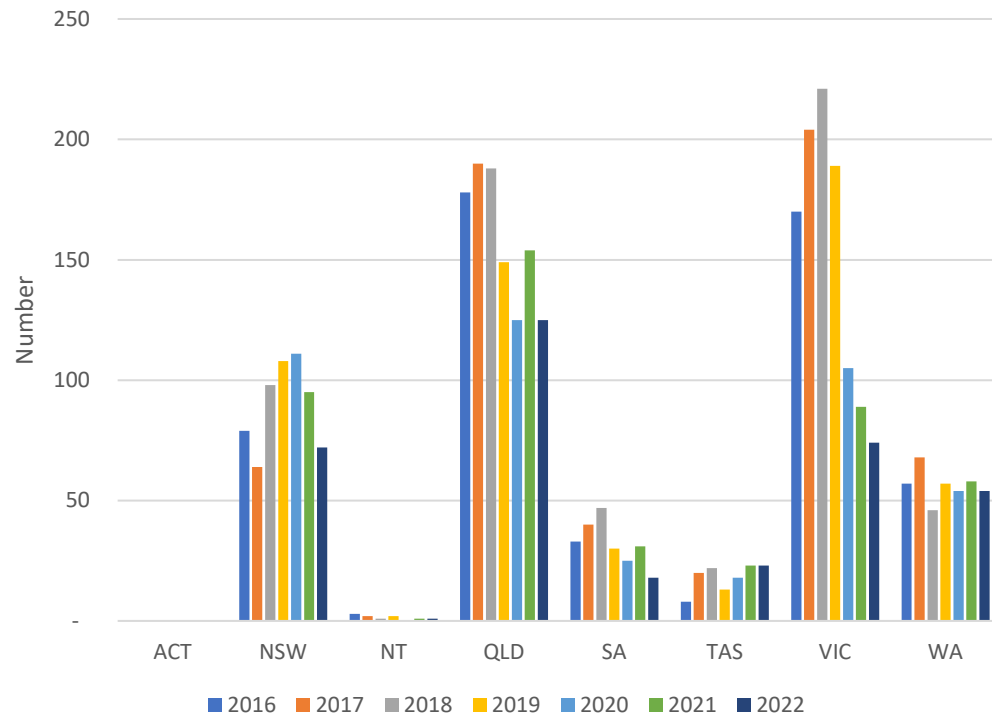


1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 2021. The requirements for operator reporting of notifiable occurrences are set out in the Reporting Requirements for Notifiable Occurrences. See [here](#) for information about notifiable occurrences. On 1/7/2022 the definition of Near Miss/Near Hit has changed and now only requires incidents to be reported where a collision has only been narrowly avoided by chance and there was a high chance of collision if circumstances were slightly different. This resulted in a decrease of “Near Miss” incidents compared to previous years.

NEAR MISS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS 2016-2022¹ ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK

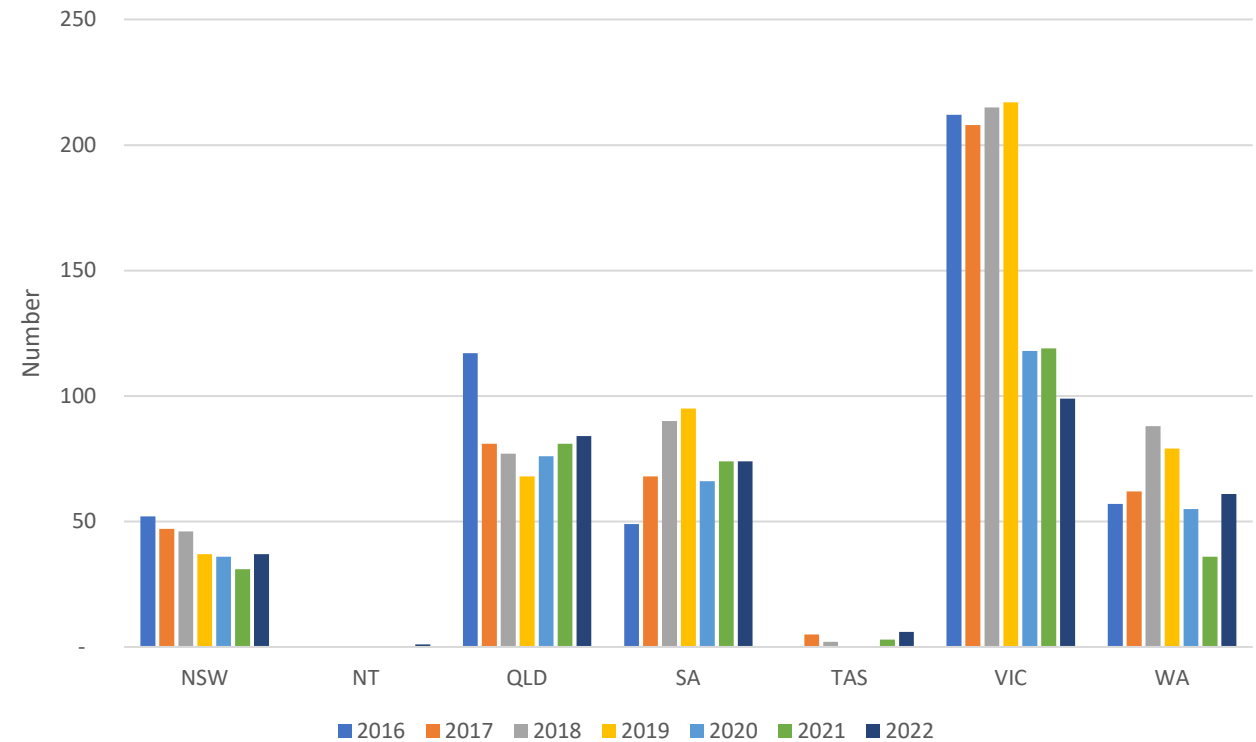
NEAR MISS WITH ROAD VEHICLE

In this period there were 3,543 near misses with a road vehicle at a level crossing, an average of 506 per year.



NEAR MISS WITH PEDESTRIAN

In this period there were 3,029 near misses with a pedestrian at a level crossing, an average of 433 per year.



1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of Near Miss/Near Hit has changed and now only requires incidents to be reported where a collision has only been narrowly avoided by chance and there was a high chance of collision if circumstances were slightly different. This resulted in a decrease of “Near Miss” incidents compared to previous years.

NEAR MISS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

NEAR MISS WITH ROAD VEHICLE

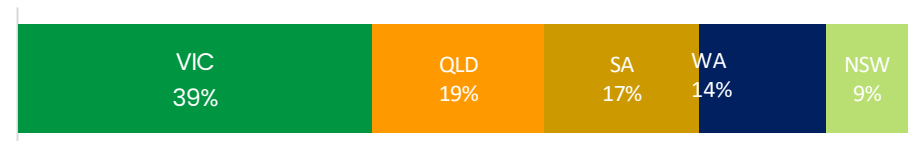
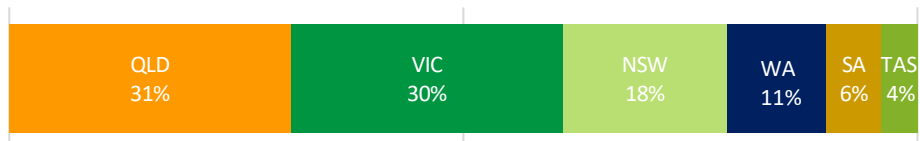
In this period there were 3,543 near misses with a road vehicle at a level crossing, an average of 506 per year.

	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
2016	79	3	178	33	8	170	57
2017	64	2	190	40	20	204	68
2018	98	1	188	47	22	221	46
2019	108	2	149	30	13	189	57
2020	111	-	125	25	18	105	54
2021	95	1	154	31	23	89	58
2022	72	1	125	18	23	74	54
TOTAL	627	10	1,109	224	127	1,052	394
AVERAGE	90	1	158	32	18	150	56

NEAR MISS WITH PEDESTRIAN

In this period there were 3,029 near misses with a pedestrian at a level crossing, an average of 433 per year.

	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
2016	52	-	117	49	-	212	57
2017	47	-	81	68	5	208	62
2018	46	-	77	90	2	215	88
2019	37	-	68	95	-	217	79
2020	36	-	76	66	-	118	55
2021	31	-	81	74	3	119	36
2022	37	1	84	74	6	99	61
TOTAL	286	1	584	516	16	1,188	438
AVERAGE	41	0	83	74	2	170	63

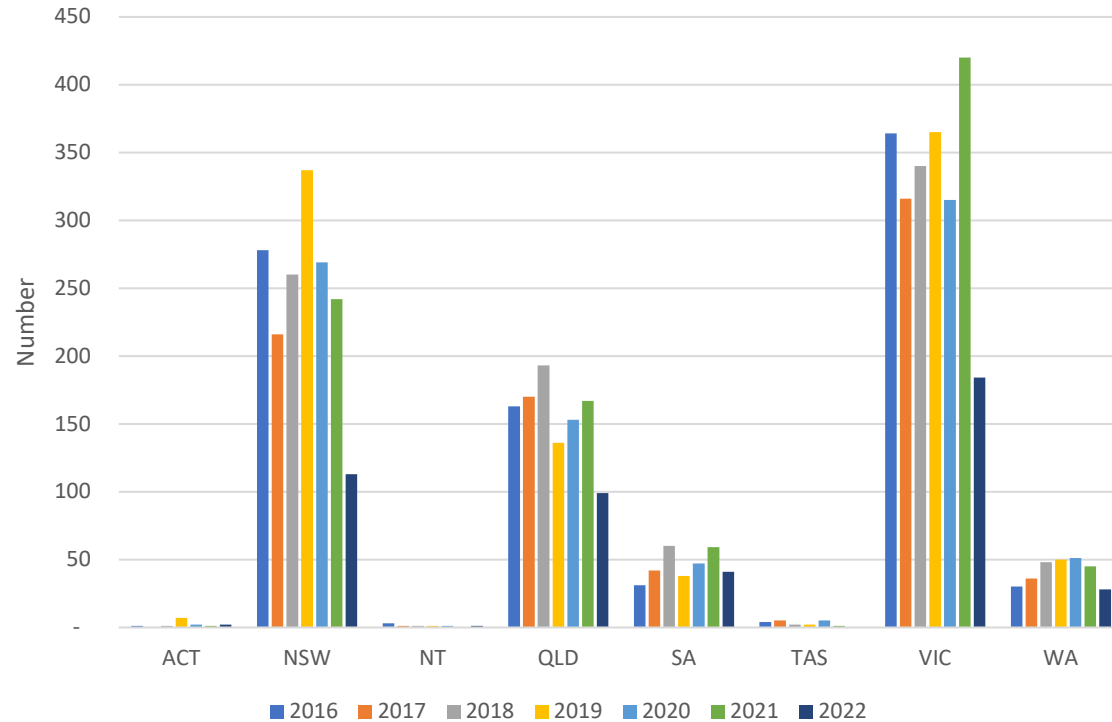


In addition, 1% in TAS and less than 1% in NT

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of Near Miss/Near Hit has changed and now only requires incidents to be reported where a collision has only been narrowly avoided by chance and there was a high chance of collision if circumstances were slightly different. This resulted in a decrease of “Near Miss” incidents compared to previous years.

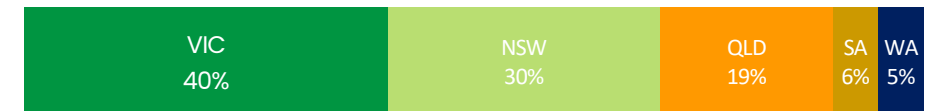
NEAR MISS WITH TRESPASSER ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2022¹

In this period there were 5,747 near misses with a trespasser, an average of 821 per year.



	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
2016	1	278	3	163	31	4	364	30
2017	-	216	1	170	42	5	316	36
2018	1	260	1	193	60	2	340	48
2019	7	337	1	136	38	2	365	50
2020	2	269	1	153	47	5	315	51
2021	1	242	-	167	59	1	420	45
2022	2	113	1	99	41	-	184	28
TOTAL	14	1,715	8	1,081	318	19	2,304	288
AVERAGE	2	245	1	154	45	3	329	41

DISTRIBUTION OF NEAR MISS WITH TRESPASSER BY STATE



Incidents in ACT, NT and TAS combined is less than 1%

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 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. On 1/7/2022 the definition of Near Miss/Near Hit has changed and now only requires incidents to be reported where a collision has only been narrowly avoided by chance and there was a high chance of collision if circumstances were slightly different. This resulted in a decrease of “Near Miss” incidents compared to previous years.



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