



FATALITIES, INJURIES AND NEAR HITS ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2001-2023

MARCH 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
NTRODUCTION	3
NOTES ON THE DATA IN THIS REPORT	4
SUMMARY	5
FATALITIES ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2001-2023	6
FATALITIES & INJURIES BY CAUSE ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	7
FATALITIES ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK BY YEAR & CAUSE 2016-2023	8
SUICIDES, SUSPECTED & ATTEMPTED SUICIDES ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK BY STATE 2016-2023	9
FRESPASSER STRUCK BY TRAIN ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	10
FRESPASSER - OTHER ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	11
TOTAL TRESPASS OCCURENCES ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	12
FATALITIES & INJURIES BECAUSE OF COLLISIONS WITH A ROAD VEHICLE ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	13
FATALITIES & INJURIES BECAUSE OF COLLISIONS WITH A PEDESTRIAN ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	14
TOTAL LEVEL CROSSING OCCURRENCES ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	15
NEAR HITS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023 GRAPHS	16
NEAR HITS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023 DATA	17
NEAR HITS WITH TRESPASSER ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	18
NEAR HITS WITH TRESPASSER AND AT LEVEL CROSSINGS ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023	19



INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by the TrackSAFE Foundation to increase knowledge and inform prevention activities to reduce fatalities, injuries and near hits 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 hits 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.

The Rail Industry Trauma Management Framework developed by TrackSAFE provides guidance on best practice trauma management and should form the foundation of internal policies and procedures in rail organisations. Rail RUOK? Day is celebrated across the rail industry every April. Rail RUOK? activities throughout the year build skills and confidence to ask a workmate "R U OK?" and know what to say and do if they say no. TrackSAFE also offers a range of webinars and other activities to support the wellbeing and resilience of the rail workforce.

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 launched <u>Suicide Awareness Training</u> 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 <u>Pause.Call.Be Heard</u> signage is used widely in the rail corridor as well as being delivered digitally in bursts to those in and near rail locations.

Every incident on the network can 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.

More information on TrackSAFE's activities is available via its <u>website</u>. Copies of reports commissioned by TrackSAFE and referenced in this report are available in TrackSAFE's <u>Information Hub</u>.

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.



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.
- Two amendments were made to the original 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 in incidents compared to previous years.

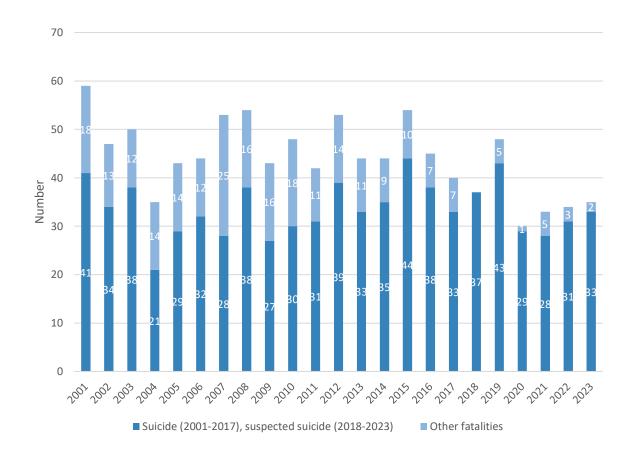


SUMMARY

- Between 2001-2023 there were 2,330 fatalities, 1,685 suicides or suspected suicides and 645¹ other fatalities on the Australian heavy rail network. This is a total annual average of 101 fatalities per year (73 suicides & suspected suicides and 28 other fatalities), or almost 2 each week. Most occur in Victoria (44%) followed by New South Wales (30%), Queensland (12%), Western Australia (9%) and South Australia (5%) and 7 in the Northern Territory and Tasmania and 2 in the Australian Capital Territory¹.
- Between 2001-2023 there were 1,015 fatalities 772 suicides or suspected suicides and 243 other fatalities on the Victorian heavy rail network. This is a total annual average of 45 fatalities per year (34 suicides & suspected suicides and 11 other fatalities), or almost 4 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 2016-2023 in Victoria there were:
 - a total of 565 fatalities, injuries and attempted suicides with no injuries reported on ONRSR, an average of 71 per year.
 - 304 fatalities including 281 (92%) suspected suicides.
 - 167 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.
 - 12 fatalities and 29 injuries to trespassers. In addition, there were 2,306 near hits with trespassers, an average of 288 per year. There are likely to have been many more near hits that did not meeting the regulatory reporting threshold.
 - 11 fatalities and 64 injuries as a result of collisions with a road vehicles and pedestrians at a level crossing. In addition, there were 1,114 near hits with a road vehicle and 1,301 near hits with a pedestrian at level crossings, an average of 302 per year. There are likely to have been many more near misses that did not meeting the regulatory reporting threshold.
 - 1 minor injury as a result of an other struck by train incident.



FATALITIES ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2001-2023^{1,2}



In this period there were 1,015 fatalities – 772 (76%) suicides or suspected suicides and 243 (24%) other fatalities. This is a total annual average of 45 fatalities per year (34 suicides & suspected suicides and 11 other fatalities), or almost 4 per month.

STATE DISTRIBUTION OF FATALITIES



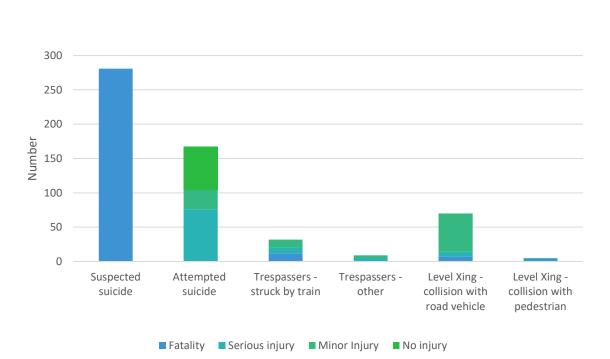
In addition, there were 7 fatalities in NT, 6 fatalities in TAS and the NT and 1 in the ACT.

- 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 2023 (for 2018-2023 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



FATALITIES & INJURIES BY CAUSE ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

In this period there were 565 fatalities, injuries and attempted suicides with no injury reported to the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, an average of 71 per year. 92% of all fatalities were suspected suicides.



	Fatality	Serious	Minor	No	Total
		injury	Injury	injury	
Suspected suicide	281				281
Attempted suicide		76	28	63	167
Trespassers - struck by train	12	8	12		32
Trespassers - other	0	5	4		9
Level Xing - collision with road vehicle	7	7	56		70
Level Xing - collision with pedestrian	4	1	0		5
Other – struck by train	0	0	1		1
Total	304	97	101	63	565

STATE DISTRIBUTION OF OCCURENCES



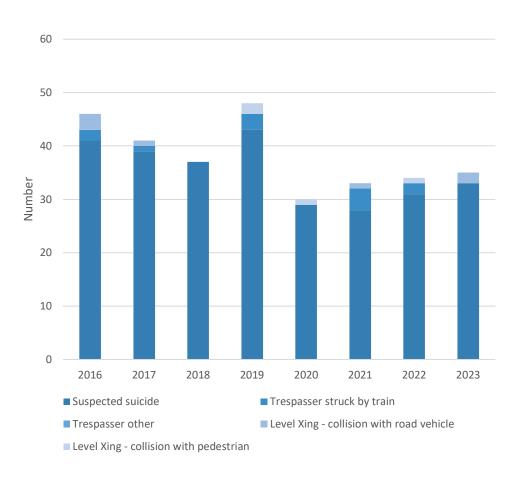
There were 6 incidents in NT, 3 in TAS and 0 in ACT

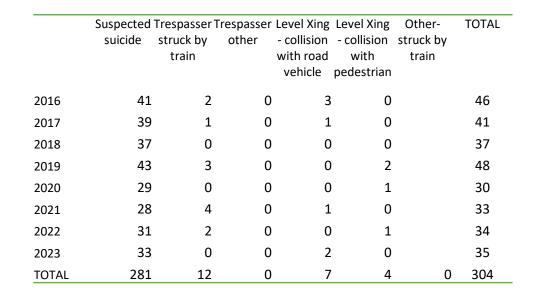
1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015—December 2023. The requirements for operator reporting of notifiable occurrences are set out in the Reporting Requirements for Notifiable Occurrences. See here for information about notifiable occurrences. On 1/7/2022 the definition of serious injury changed potentially changing reported serious injuries compared to previous years.



FATALITIES ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK BY YEAR & CAUSE 2016-2023¹

In this period there were 304 fatalities reported to ONRSR, an average of 38 per year.





STATE DISTRIBUTION OF FATALITIES²



In addition, there were 2 fatalities 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 2023. 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.

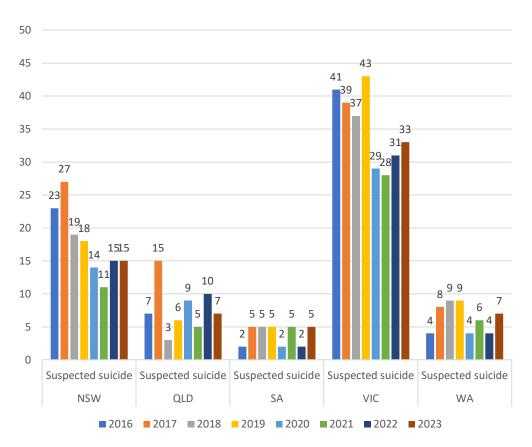


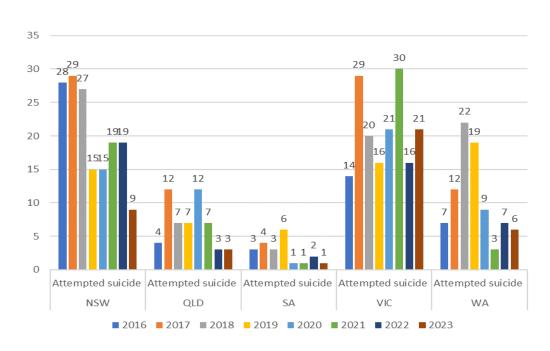


SUICIDES¹, SUSPECTED & ATTEMPTED SUICIDES^{2,3} 2016-2023 ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK BY STATE

SUSPECTED SUICIDE

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE



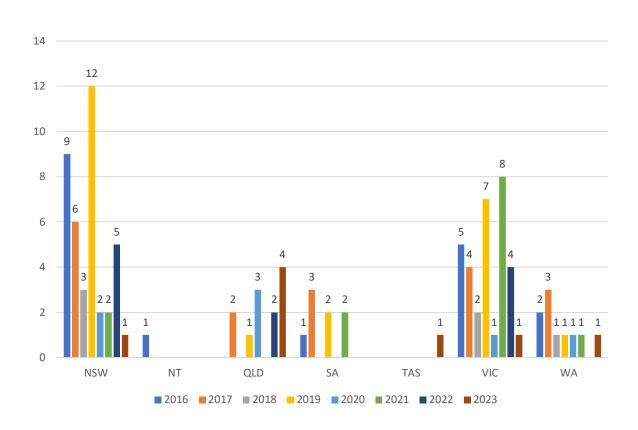


- 1. National Coronial Information System, 2020 Intentional Self-harm deaths at Australian railway locations 2000–2017, (DR20-31 and DR20-31A), November, Melbourne Australia (for 2016-2017 data).
- 2. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015—December 2023 (for 2018-2023 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 reported by NCIS for 2016 and 2017 respectively compared to 77 and 94 suspected suicides reported by ONRSR).



TRESPASSER STRUCK BY TRAIN ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

In this period there were 104 trespassers struck by a train resulting in 55 fatalities, 26 serious injuries and 23 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	
2023	1	0	4	0	1	1	8	
TOTAL	40	1	12	8	32	10	104	
There were no incidents in the ACT								

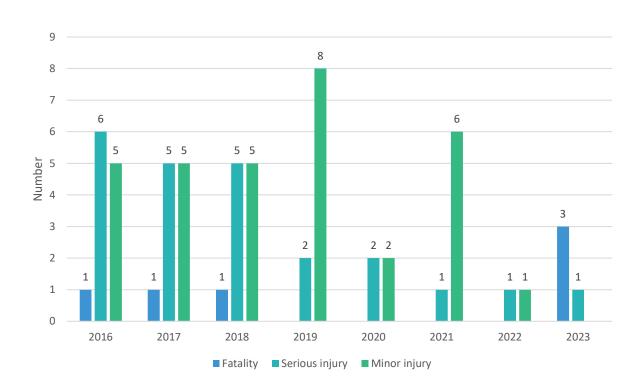
	Fatality	Serious	Minor	TOTAL
		injury	injury	
2016	8	6	4	18
2017	8	3	7	18
2018	3	1	2	6
2019	13	7	3	23
2020	2	3	2	7
2021	7	3	3	13
2022	9	1	1	11
2023	5	2	1	8
TOTAL	55	26	23	104

^{1.} Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015—December 2023. 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 changing reported serious injuries compared to previous years.



TRESPASSER - OTHER ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

In this period there were 59 other trespasser incidents resulting in 4 fatalities, 23 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
2023	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
TOTAL	22	1	16	4	9	7	59

There were no incidents in the ACT or TAS.

	Fatality	Serious	Minor	TOTAL
		injury	injury	
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
2023	1	1	0	4
TOTAL	4	23	32	59

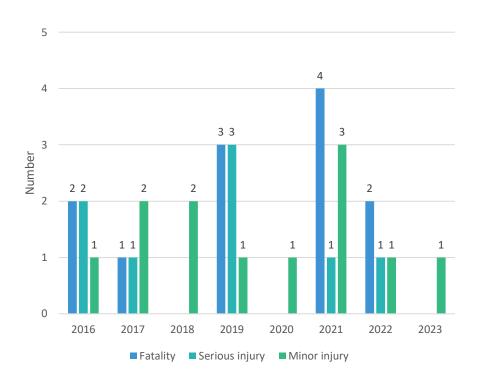
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TOTAL TRESPASS OCCURENCES ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

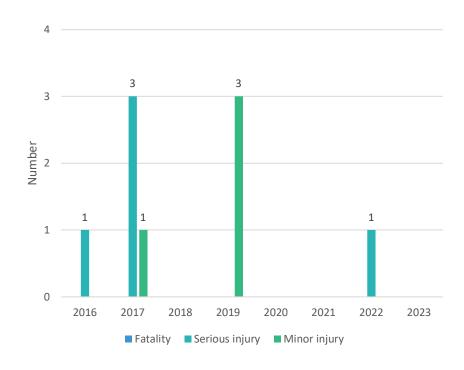
TRESPASSER STRUCK BY TRAIN

In this period there were 32 trespassers struck by a train resulting in 12 fatalities, 8 serious injuries and 12 minor injuries.



TRESPASSER OTHER INCIDENT

In this period there were 9 other trespasser incidents resulting in 5 serious injuries and 4 minor injuries. There were no incidents reported in 2018, 2020, 2021 and 2023.

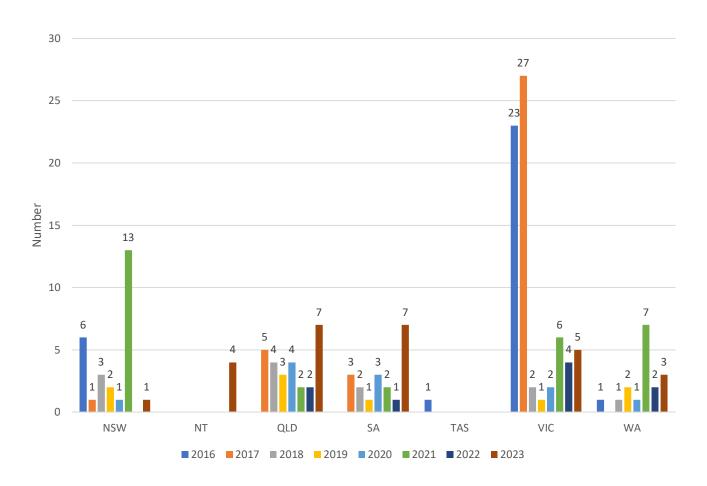


^{1.} Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015–December 2023. The requirements for operator reporting of notifiable occurrences are set out in the Reporting Requirements for Notifiable Occurrences. See here for information about notifiable occurrences. On 1/7/2022 the definition of serious injury changed potentially changing reported serious injuries compared to previous years.



FATALITIES & INJURIES BECAUSE OF COLLISIONS WITH A ROAD VEHICLE AT LEVEL CROSSINGS ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

In this period there were 27 fatalities and 138 injuries because of road vehicle collisions at a level crossing.



	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	TOTAL
2016	6	0	0	0	1	23	1	31
2017	1	0	5	3	0	27	0	36
2018	3	0	4	2	0	2	1	12
2019	2	0	3	1	0	1	2	9
2020	1	0	4	3	0	2	1	11
2021	13	0	2	2	0	6	7	30
2022	0	0	2	1	0	4	2	9
2023	1	4	7	7	0	5	3	27
TOTAL	27	4	27	19	1	70	17	165

There were no incidents in the ACT.

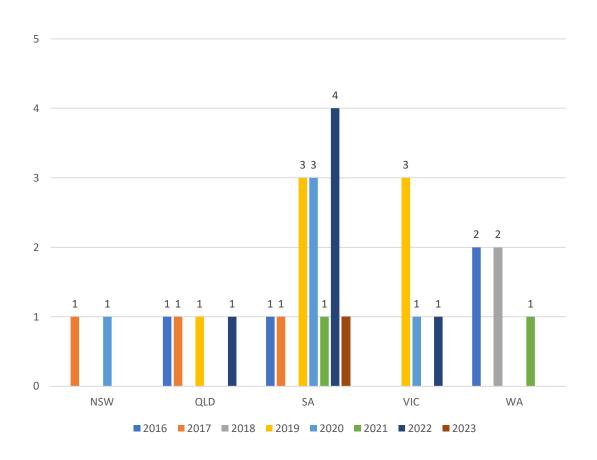
	Fatality	Serious	Minor	TOTAL
		injury	injury	
2016	3	3	25	31
2017	3	3	30	36
2018	3	4	5	12
2019	2	1	6	9
2020	2	2	7	11
2021	5	7	18	30
2022	2	2	5	9
2023	7	6	14	27
TOTAL	27	28	110	165

^{1.} Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015—December 2023. 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.



FATALITIES & INJURIES BECAUSE OF COLLISIONS WITH A PEDESTRIAN AT LEVEL CROSSINGS ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

In this period there were 13 fatalities and 17 injuries because 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	2	0	7
2020	1	0	3	1	0	5
2021	0	0	1	0	1	2
2022	0	1	4	1	0	6
2023	0	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	2	4	14	5	5	30

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

	Fatality	Serious	Minor	TOTAL
		injury	injury	
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
2023	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	13	13	4	30

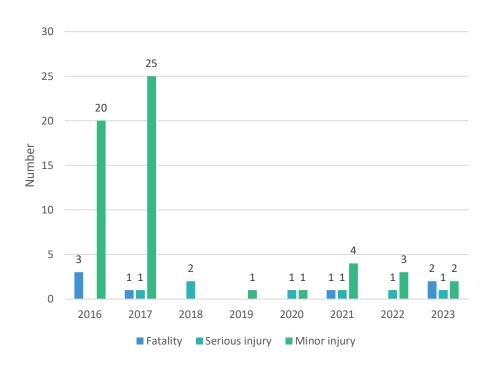
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TOTAL LEVEL CROSSING OCCURENCES ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

COLLISION WITH A ROAD VEHICLE

In this period there were 7 fatalities, 7 serious injuries and 56 minor injuries because of road vehicle collisions at a level crossing.



COLLISION WITH A PEDESTRIAN

In this period there were 4 fatalities (2 in 2019, 1 in 2020 and 1 in 2022) and 1 serious injury (2019) because of collisions with a pedestrian at a level crossing.

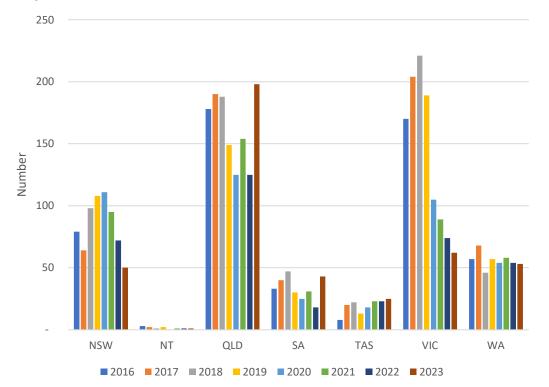
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NEAR HITS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

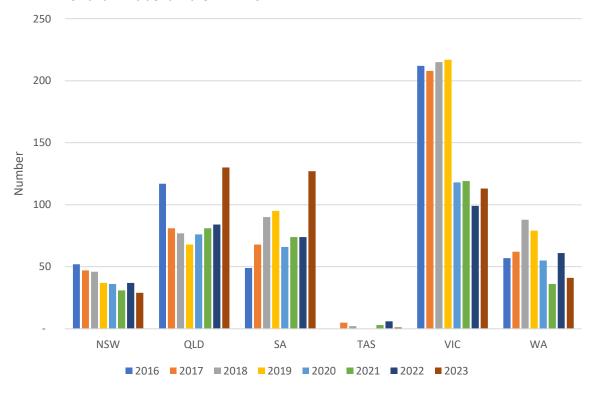
NEAR HITS WITH ROAD VEHICLE

In this period there were 3,975 near misses with a road vehicle at a level crossing, an average of 497 per year. There were no incidents in the ACT.



NEAR HITS WITH PEDESTRIAN

In this period there were 3,470 near misses with a pedestrian at a level crossing, an average of 434 per year. There were no incidents in the ACT and 1 incident in the NT in 2022.



^{1.} Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015—December 2023. 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 may result in a decrease of incidents compared to previous years.



NEAR HITS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

NEAR HITS WITH ROAD VEHICLE

In this period there were 3,975 near hits with a road vehicle at a level crossing, an average of 497 per year. There were no incidents in the ACT.

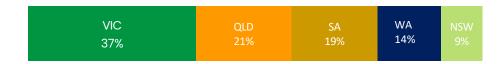
	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
2016	79	3	178	33	8	170	57
2017	64	2	190	40	20	204	68
2018	98	1	188	47	22	221	46
2019	108	2	149	30	13	189	57
2020	111	-	125	25	18	105	54
2021	95	1	154	31	23	89	58
2022	72	1	125	18	23	74	54
2023	50	1	198	43	25	62	53
TOTAL	677	11	1,307	267	152	1,114	447
AVERAGE	85	1	163	33	19	139	56

NEAR HITS WITH PEDESTRIAN

In this period there were 3,470 near hits with a pedestrian at a level crossing, an average of 434 per year. There were no incidents in the ACT.

	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
2023	29	-	130	127	1	113	41
TOTAL	315	1	714	643	17	1,301	479
AVERAGE	39	0	89	80	2	163	60





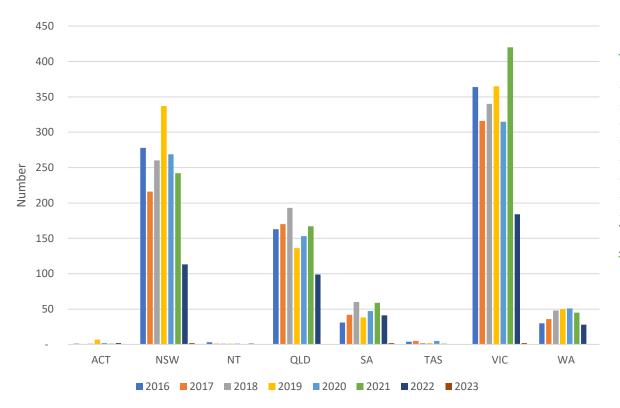
In addition, less than 1% in TAS and NT.



^{1.} Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015—December 2023. 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 may result in a decrease of incidents compared to previous years.

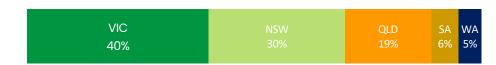
NEAR HITS WITH TRESPASSER ON THE AUSTRALIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

In this period there were 5,753 near hits with a trespasser, an average of 719 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
2023	-	2	-	-	2	-	2	-
TOTAL	14	1,717	8	1,081	320	19	2,306	288
AVERAGE	2	215	1	135	40	2	288	36

DISTRIBUTION OF NEAR MISS WITH TRESPASSER BY STATE



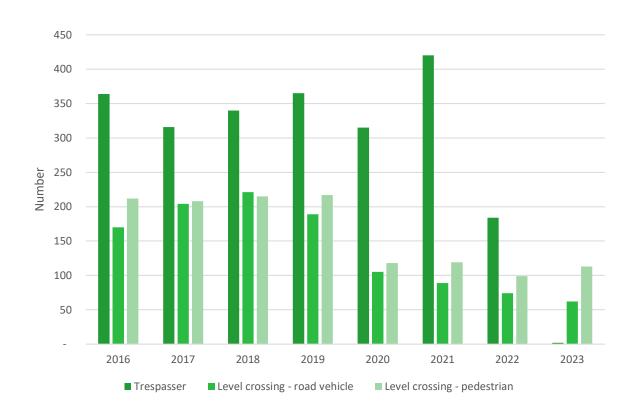
Incidents in ACT, NT and TAS combined is less than 1%

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015—December 2023. 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 may result in a decrease of incidents compared to previous years.



NEAR HITS AT LEVEL CROSSINGS AND WITH TRESPASSERS ON THE VICTORIAN HEAVY RAIL NETWORK 2016-2023¹

In this period there were a total of 4,721 near hits, an average of 590 per year, 2,306 with trespassers, 1,114 at a level crossing with a road vehicle and 1,301 at a level crossing with pedestrians.



	Trespasser	Level crossing - road vehicle	Level crossing - pedestrian	Total
2016	364	170	212	746
2017	316	204	208	728
2018	340	221	215	776
2019	365	189	217	771
2020	315	105	118	538
2021	420	89	119	628
2022	184	74	99	357
2023	2	62	113	177
Total	2,306	1,114	1,301	4,721

^{1.} Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Occurrence extract-fatalities, serious injuries, minor injuries, attempted suicide no consequence July 2015—December 2023. 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 may result in a decrease of incidents compared to previous years.





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