

# FATALITIES & INJURIES ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2023

APRIL 2024

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# 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 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 hits 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.

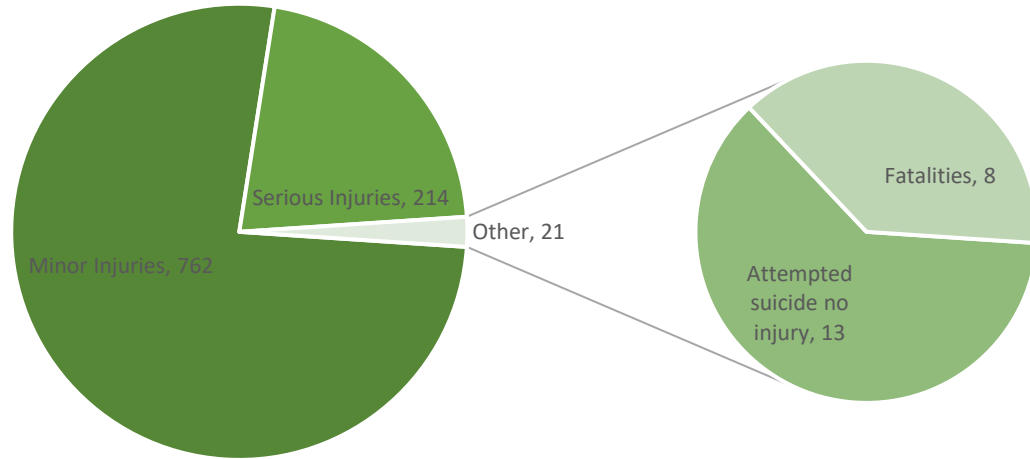
Working closely with rail organisations, the TrackSAFE Foundation is actively engaged in a wide range of rail safety and suicide prevention activities including public awareness campaigns, facilitation of the annual Rail Safety Week and Rail RUOK? Day, the delivery of training and knowledge sharing activities 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 reduced in 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 2016-2023<sup>1</sup>



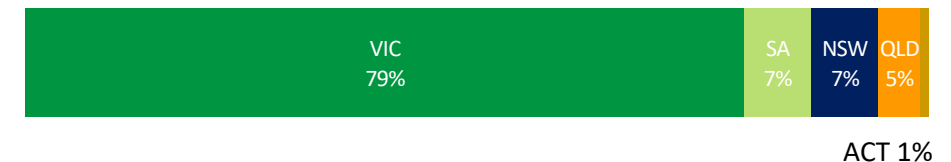
Between 2016 – 2023 there were 8 fatalities and 976 injuries plus 13 people who attempted suicide but were not injured. Most incidents occur in Melbourne where Yarra Trams operate a network of approximately 250km of track. There is currently 16 km of operational track in Adelaide, 25km in Sydney, 3km 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, 6 were incidents with pedestrians and 1 was an incident with a road vehicle.

Between 2016-2021 62% of serious and minor injuries were the result of slips, trips and falls onboard or alighting or disembarking<sup>2</sup>.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
Fatality	0	1	0	0	1	0	6	0	8
Serious Injury	2	2	0	4	3	0	203	0	214
Minor Injury	10	69	0	42	66	0	575	0	762
Attempted suicide no injury	0	2	0	0	4	0	7	0	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>997</b>

## STATE DISTRIBUTION



1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Notifiable Occurrences Category A or B January 2016 – 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 to ONRSR

2. On 1 July 2022 reporting requirements to report slips, trips and falls changed. Data on slips, trips and falls was therefore not available for the second half of 2022 and 2023

# INJURIES ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2023<sup>1</sup>

## SERIOUS INJURIES

Between 2016 – 2021, 61% of serious injury occurrences were because 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. Between 2016-2023 if slips, trips and falls are excluded<sup>2</sup>, most incidents (90%, 74) are because of collisions between pedestrian, cyclists, cars and trucks and the light rail vehicle. There were 5 attempted suicides.

	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
2022	1	2	0	0	11	14
2023	0	0	0	0	12	12
TOTAL	2	2	4	3	203	214

## MINOR INJURIES

Between 2016-2021, 62% of minor injury occurrences were because 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. Between 2016-2023 if slips, trips and falls are excluded<sup>2</sup>, almost all incidents (98%, 324) are because of collisions between pedestrians, cyclists, cars and trucks and the light rail vehicle. There were 3 attempted suicides.

	ACT <sup>3</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
2022	2	24	0	12	31	69
2023	0	1	1	0	24	26
TOTAL	10	69	42	66	575	762

1. Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, Notifiable Occurrences Category A or B January 2016 –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 to ONRSR
2. On 1 July 2022 reporting requirements to report slips, trips and falls changed. Data on slips, trips and falls was therefore not available for the second half of 2022 and 2023
3. 2018 incident was during commissioning. Passenger services commenced April 2019

# ATTEMPTED SUICIDE ON AUSTRALIAN LIGHT RAIL 2016-2023<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
2022				1	4	5
2023	1			0	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>

21 people attempted suicide on the light rail network between 2016-2023. 5 resulted in serious injuries, 3 resulted in minor injuries and in 13 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 – 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 to ONRSR

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The logo for TrackSAFE Foundation features a vertical green bar to the left of the text. The word "TrackSAFE" is in black, with "SAFE" in green. Below it, the word "Foundation" is in black.

**TrackSAFE**  
**Foundation**