



Australian Government

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

# Safety Advisory Notice

To rail transport operators

## Office of Transport Safety Investigations

Number: RO-2022-001-SAN-02

### Assessment of rail safety worker competence

A recent ATSB / OTSI investigation has found issues with the assessment of rail safety worker competence. These issues have involved both vocational education and training (VET) and enterprise-based qualifications.

#### What happened

The Office of Transport Safety Investigations (OTSI) has completed an investigation into an accident, on behalf of the ATSB, where 3 locomotives located at the rear of a loaded grain train separated from the lead portion of the train in transit. Shortly afterwards, the lead portion of the train stopped and the 3 now detached locomotives at the rear collided with the stationary lead portion. This resulted in significant damage to the rear wagon and a locomotive.

#### What increased risk

The investigation found that the train crew had not performed a 'stretch test' after completing shunting duties at Werris Creek, which contributed to the incident. It also found that while the train crew had been assessed as competent in shunting during both VET and enterprise-based assessments on several occasions, the supporting evidence collected was usually limited to a single check box that the task had been 'performed correctly'.

#### Safety advisory notice

**RO-2022-001-SAN-02:** The Australian Transport Safety Bureau strongly encourages rail transport operators, and registered training organisations acting on their behalf, to review and validate their rail safety worker competency assessments. This is to ensure these assessment tools, processes and judgements are reliably meeting the principles and requirements of competency-based training and assessment.

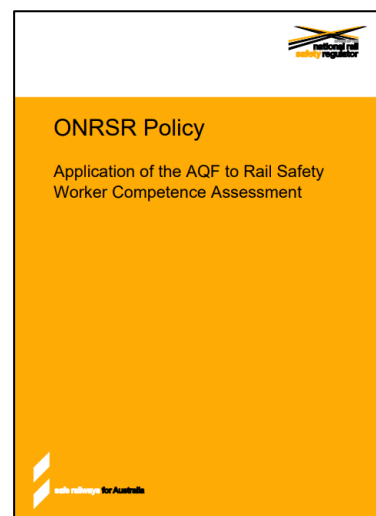
#### Assessment of competence

The competence of rail safety workers is critical to safe railway operations. Where competency assessments are aligned to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), i.e. VET, certain standards must be met. These include, in part, that sufficient assessment evidence is collected to ensure a sound, reliable and consistent competency decision is made, irrespective of the assessor. For example, for practical assessments well-described skills, observable behaviours and underpinning knowledge of the task being performed should be assessed and recorded.

Where complying with the AQF is not reasonably practical, for example, a suitable unit of competency or qualification is not available, enterprise-based assessments should still follow these same principles of competence-based training and assessment.

Practical guidance to assist rail transport operators in meeting their obligations include those from the Australian Skills Quality Authority (*Users' guide to the standards for registered training organisations 2015*) and the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (*Application of the AQF to rail safety worker competence assessment*).

Read more about this ATSB investigation: [Collision between banking locomotives and grain train 5446, near Werris Creek, New South Wales, on 6 January 2022](#)



RSW competence assessment policy (Source: ONRSR)

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