



National
Rail
Skills
Hub

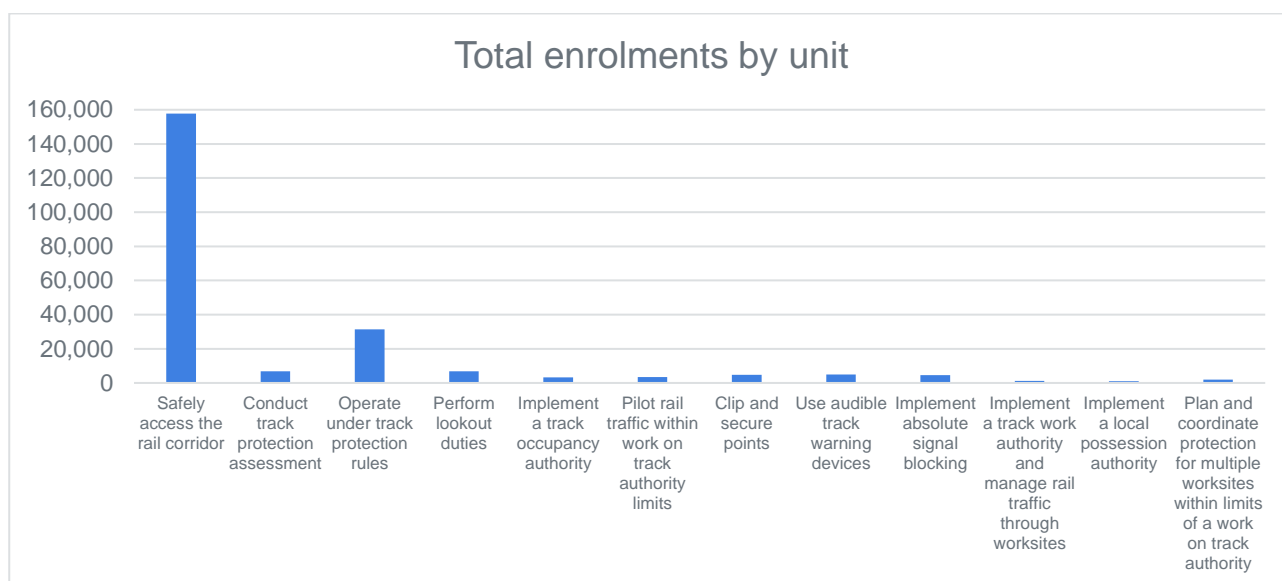
Track Protection Officer— analysis of NCVER data

June 2023

Analysis of Track Protection Officer training data

The National Rail Skills Hub has analysed National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) data¹ relating to 12 units of competency relevant to working as a track protection officer.² These units were selected for this analysis on the basis of their inclusion in various matrices on the Rail Industry Worker website for track protection officers.³ The units included in the analysis here are those generally common to multiple Rail Infrastructure Managers, and are applicable across a range of levels of experience/job roles for protection officers.

Among these 12 units, a large majority (almost 70%) of enrolments between 2017 and 2021 (the time period analysed) occurred in *Safely access the rail corridor*, while a further 14% of enrolments were in *Operate under track protection rules*. No other unit of competency had a share above 3% of total enrolments in the 12 units analysed, with the largest of these remaining units having around 6,850 cumulative enrolments over the five years.



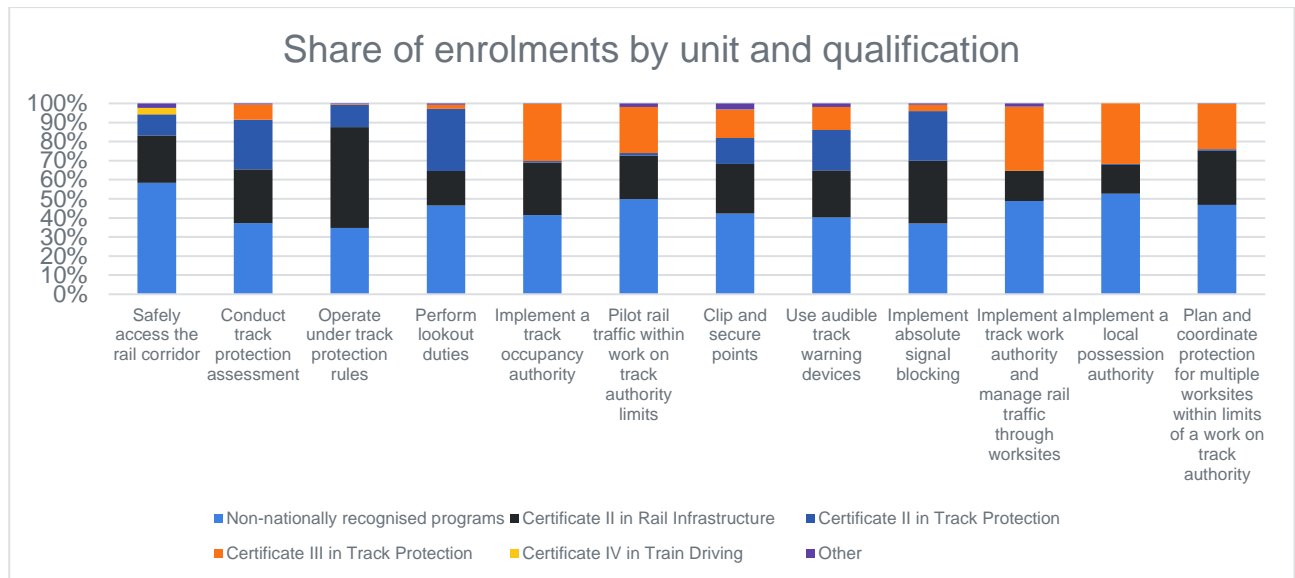
In general, enrolments were lower in 2020 and 2021 than the first three years for most of the units. The exceptions to this general trend were *Safely access the rail corridor* and three of the units associated with more advanced track protection officer job roles (all of which had more enrolments in 2021 than they had in 2017): *Implement a track work authority and manage rail traffic through worksites*; *Implement a local possession authority*; and *Plan and coordinate protection for multiple worksites within limits of a work on track authority*.

¹ NCVER, *Total VET students and courses 2021: subject enrolments DataBuilder*, 2022, accessed at: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/databuilder>.

² *Safely access the rail corridor*; *Conduct track protection assessment*; *Operate under track protection rules*; *Perform lookout duties*; *Implement a track occupancy authority*; *Pilot rail traffic within work on track authority limits*; *Clip and secure points*; *Use audible track warning devices*; *Implement absolute signal blocking*; *Implement a track work authority and manage rail traffic through worksites*; *Implement a local possession authority*; *Plan and coordinate protection for multiple worksites within limits of a work on track authority*.

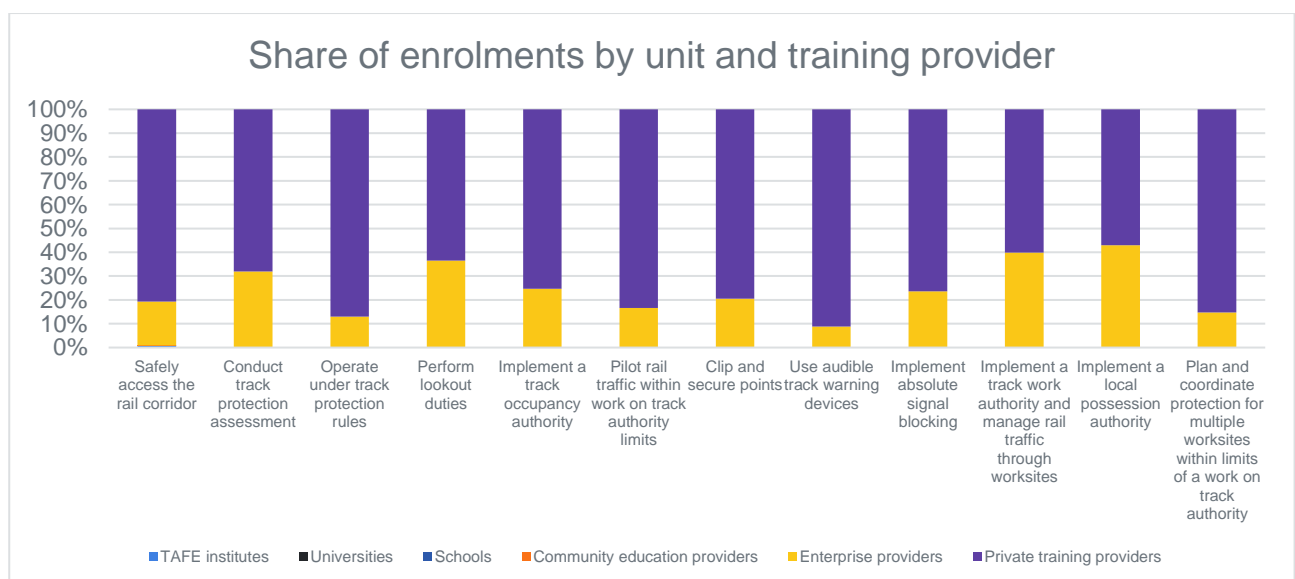
³ Rail Industry Worker, *Network Operators Matrices*, 2023, accessed at: <https://www.riw.net.au/business-rules/network-operators/>.

A high share of enrolments in each of the units were taken through non-nationally recognised programs: for most units, this share was above 40%, with the lowest being around one-third and the highest 58%. All units were also commonly taken as part of a Certificate II in Rail Infrastructure, with shares of enrolments ranging from 15% to more than half of total enrolments (in the case of *Operate under track protection rules*). As expected, there were also large enrolment shares in Track Protection qualifications at both the Certificate II and/or Certificate III levels (depending on the unit), but the graph below highlights that many protection officers may not undertake their training in the required units of competency as part of a full qualification.



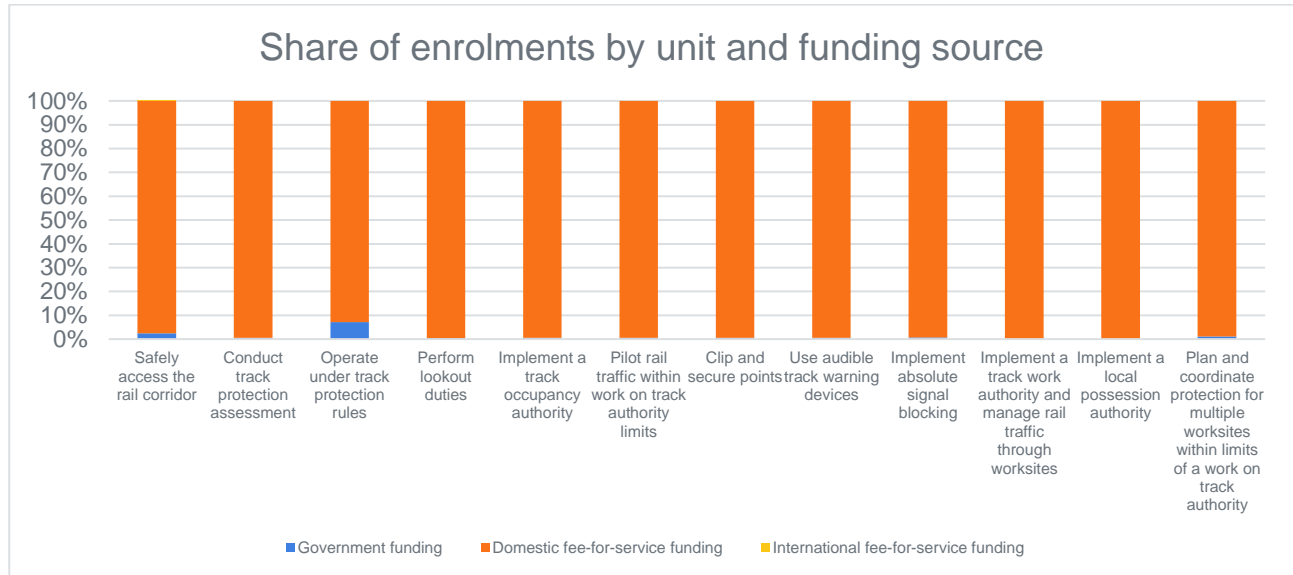
Private training providers delivered the majority of this training, with around 81% of total enrolments in the 12 units of competency being delivered by private training providers. The share delivered by private training providers was at least 57% of enrolments for each of the 12 analysed units of competency, and in most cases the share was above three-quarters of total enrolments.

Enterprise RTOs were the other significant training providers, with four of the units having at least 30% of enrolments delivered by these providers. There was very limited use of TAFEs for this training: while *Safely access the rail corridor* had more than 1,400 cumulative enrolments at TAFEs over the five years, this represented less than 1% of total enrolments in the unit, and none of the 11 other units any significant numbers of enrolments at TAFEs.



Who's paying for training?

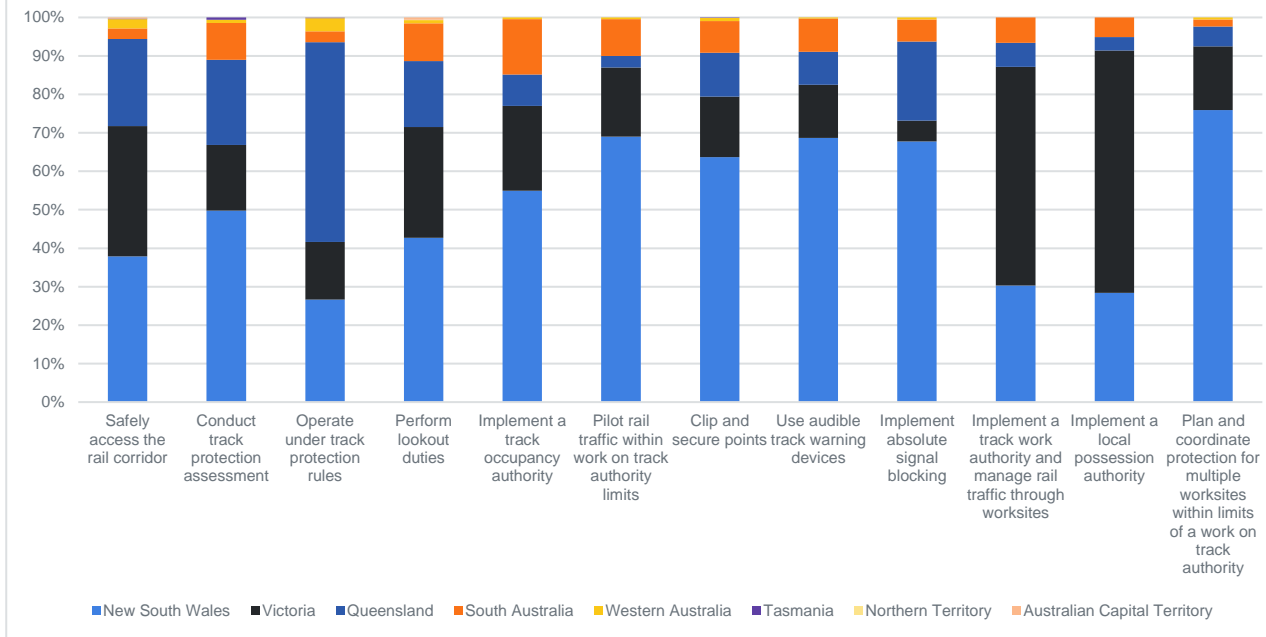
The vast majority of enrolments were funded through domestic fee-for-service funding. Only two units—*Safely access the rail corridor* and *Operate under track protection rules*—had material numbers of government-funded enrolments, but these still represented less than 10% of total enrolments in those units. Most of the government-funded enrolments were delivered by private training providers.



Enrolments by jurisdiction

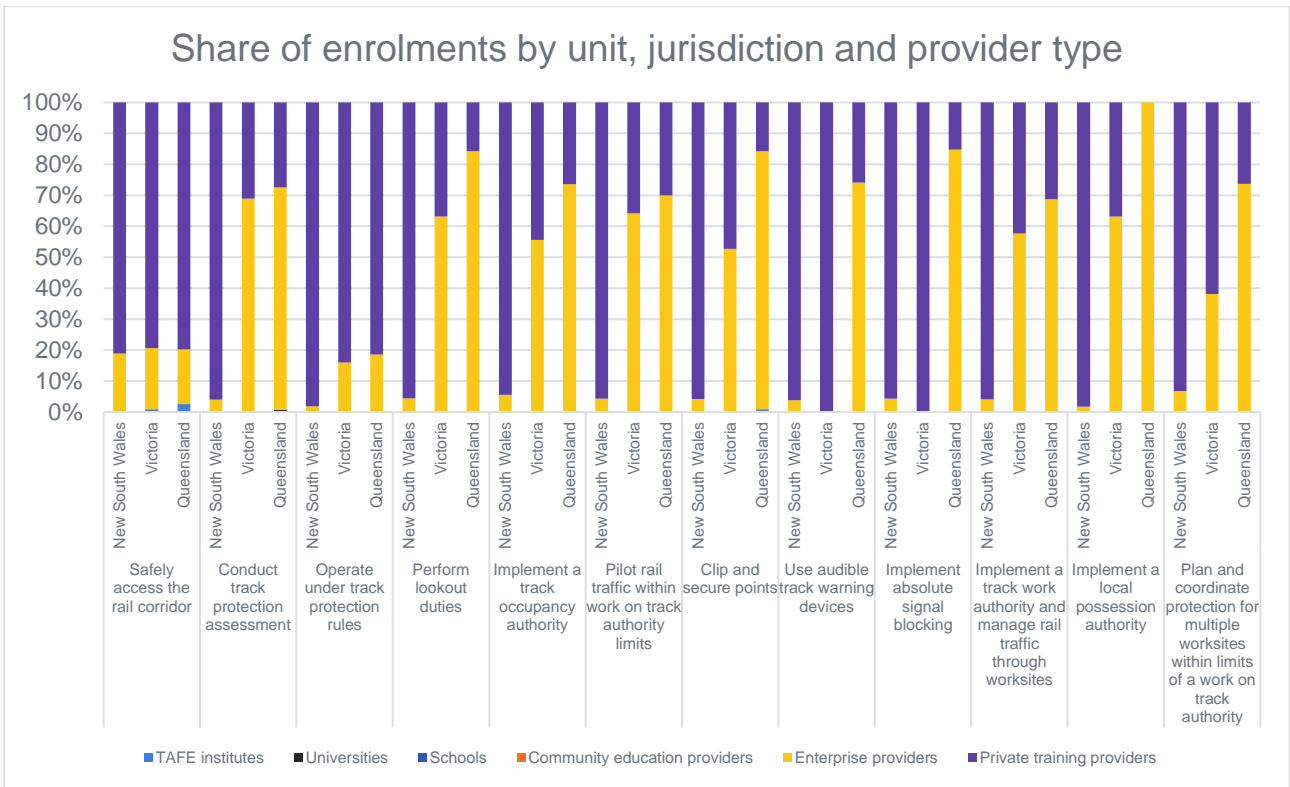
NSW was the jurisdiction with the highest number of enrolments for nine of the 12 analysed units. The exceptions to this result were Victoria having the highest number of enrolments in *Implement a track work authority and manage rail traffic through worksites* and *Implement a local possession authority*, and Queensland having by far the most enrolments in *Operate under track protection rules* (with more than half of the national total of enrolments for this unit). Collectively, the three large east coast jurisdictions had 94% of total enrolments, with the share being at least 85% for each of the 12 units. However, for certain units of competency, South Australia delivered more enrolments than Queensland.

Share of enrolments by unit and jurisdiction



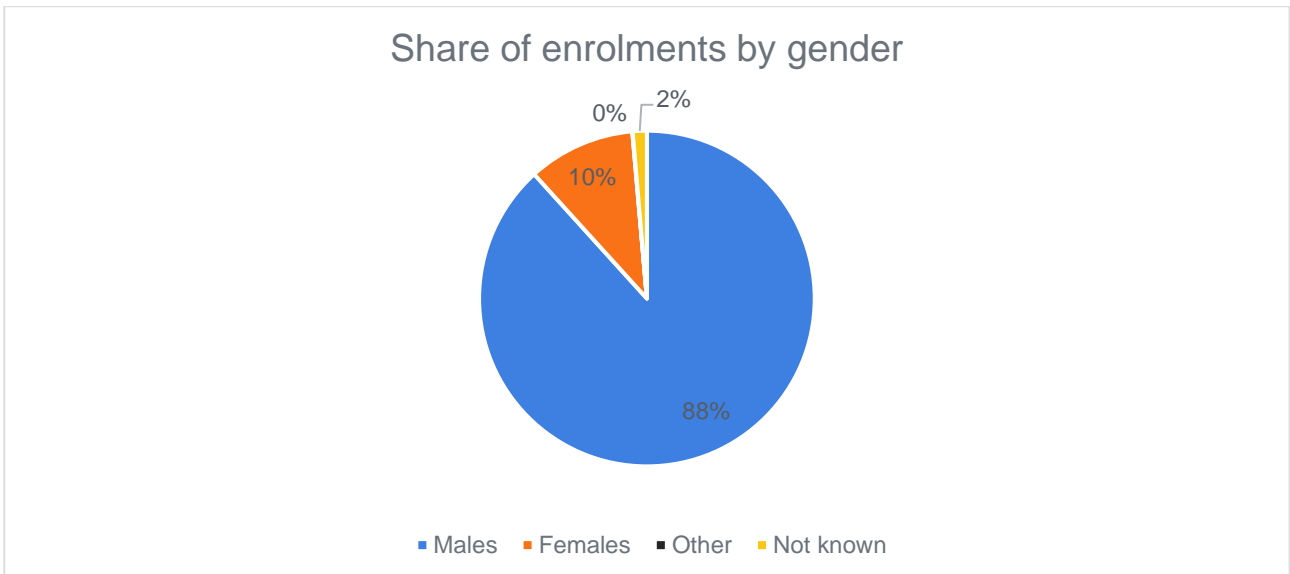
The graph below shows the different mix of training providers used for the three large east coast jurisdictions. For all 12 units, NSW delivered the vast majority of its training through private training providers—*Safely access the rail corridor* was the unit with the lowest share delivered by private training providers at 81%, with all others above 90%. By contrast, for most units Queensland delivered the majority of its training through Enterprise providers: this was the case for 10 out of the 12 analysed units (the exceptions being *Safely access the rail corridor* and *Operate under track protection rules*) with Enterprise training provider enrolment shares typically between 70% and 85% of total enrolments. Victoria was generally somewhere in between the other two states with its mix of training providers, with many units being approximately evenly split between Enterprise and private training providers. However, some units had most or all enrolments in Victoria delivered by private training providers.

Notwithstanding the jurisdictional differences in delivery shown in the graph below, the majority of enrolments across these 12 units in aggregate was delivered by private training providers. This is explained by: the high share of enrolments in NSW (which had high usage of private providers); and the high share of training delivery by private providers for *Safely access the rail corridor* and *Operate under track protection rules* which had far larger enrolment numbers than any of the other ten units.



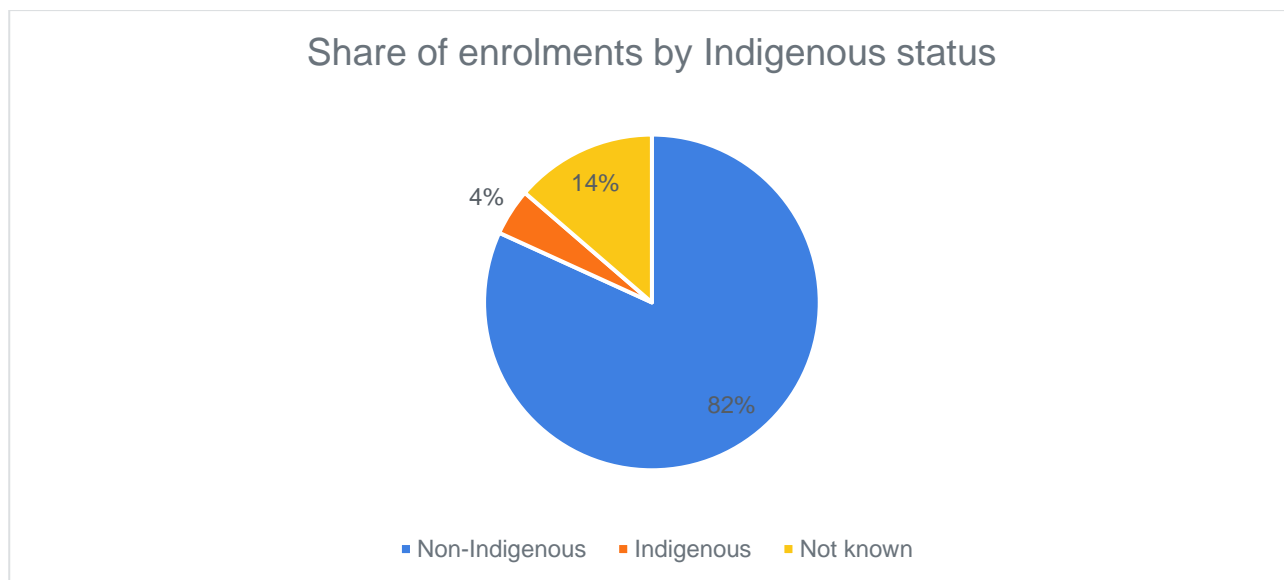
Who's training for a rail career?

Around 88% of enrolments were by males, with 10% by females and a very small share of enrolments which were other or not known. These numbers were very similar across all 12 units analysed, with the female share ranging between 9% and 13%. There were also quite similar shares of female enrolments across the three large east coast states.



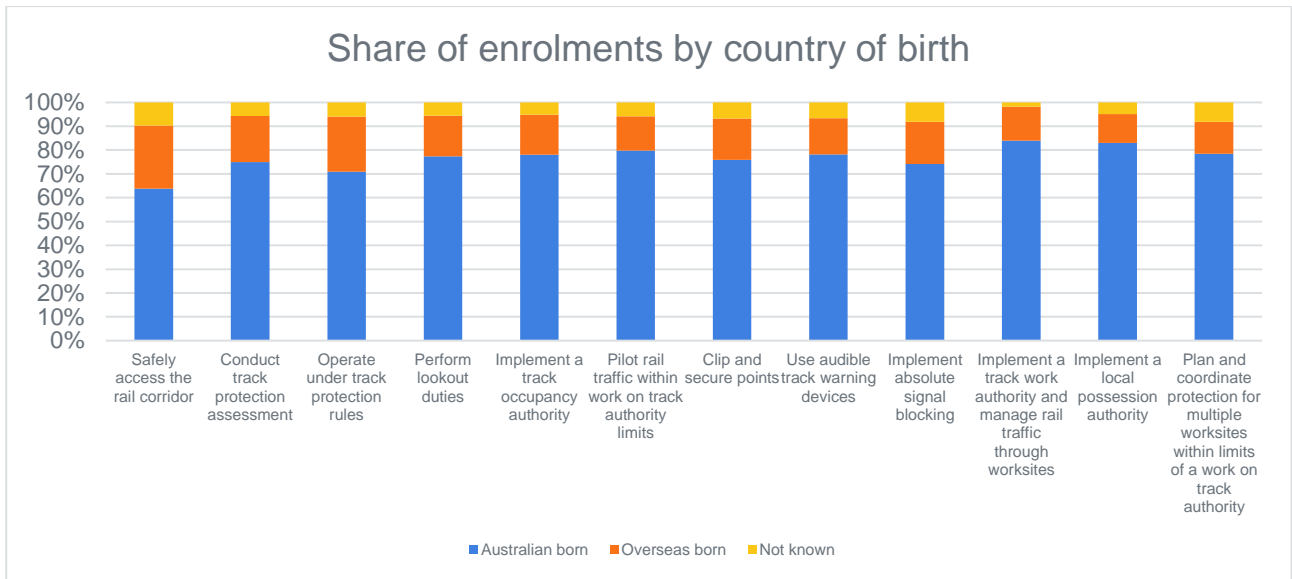
The Indigenous share of enrolments was around 4%, which is approximately the same as the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the total population (3.2%).⁴ The share of non-Indigenous enrolments was around 82%, while this information was not known for a relatively high 14% of enrolments.

The Indigenous share was relatively similar across all units of competency except for *Operate under track protection rules*, where it was higher at 8%. This was also the approximate Indigenous share of enrolments in Western Australia and Queensland, the two jurisdictions with the highest shares.

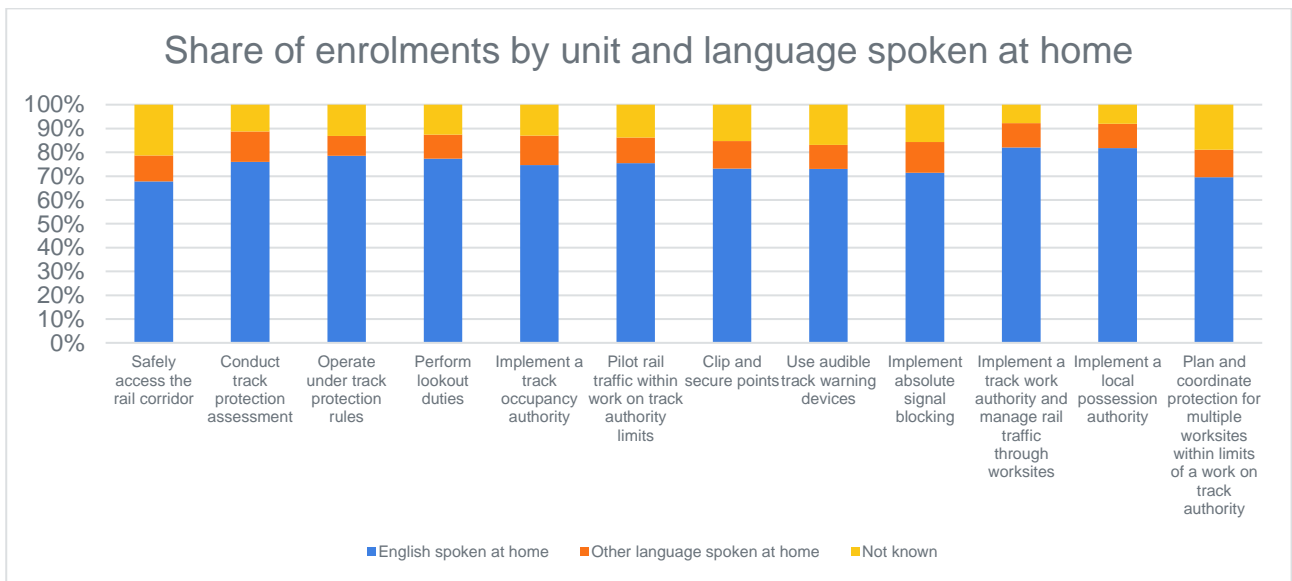


Around two-thirds of all enrolments in the 12 analysed units were by Australian-born people, with 25% born overseas and 9% where this information was not known. The Australian-born share was above 70% for eleven of the units of competency, but was lower for *Safely access the rail corridor*—the unit with almost 70% of total enrolments across the 12 units.

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people data summary*, 2021



Across all 12 units collectively, 70% of enrolments spoke English at home, while 11% spoke another language and the data was not known for 19%. The share of people speaking a language other than English was relatively similar across all units (ranging from 8% to 13%), but there was more variation between units for the percentage where home language information was not known.

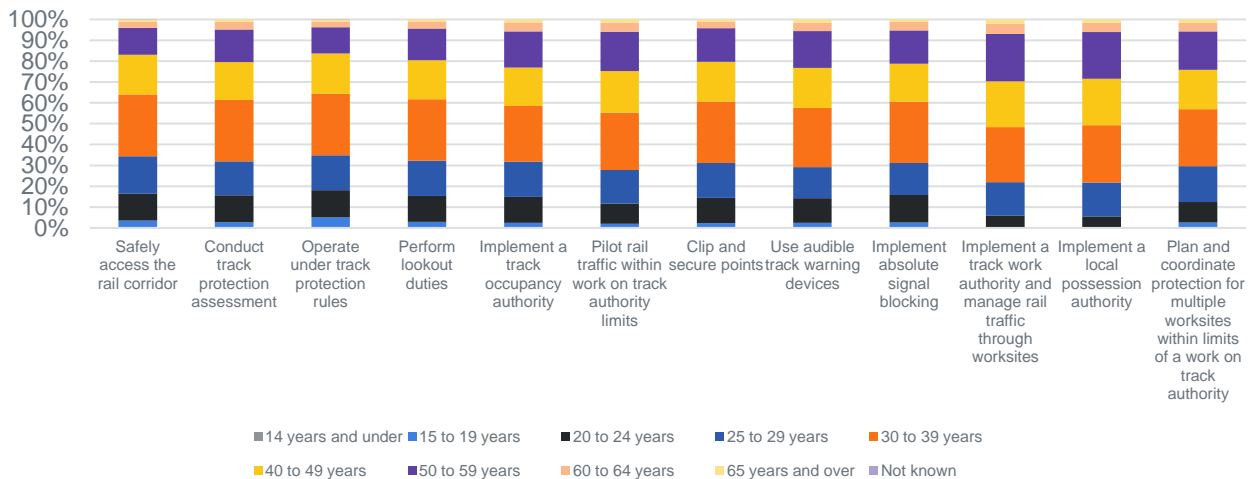


There were almost no enrolments by people doing an apprenticeship or traineeship; those that were enrolled only in *Safely access the rail corridor* and *Operate under track protection rules*, and therefore may have been enrolled in training for other job roles rather than track protection officers.

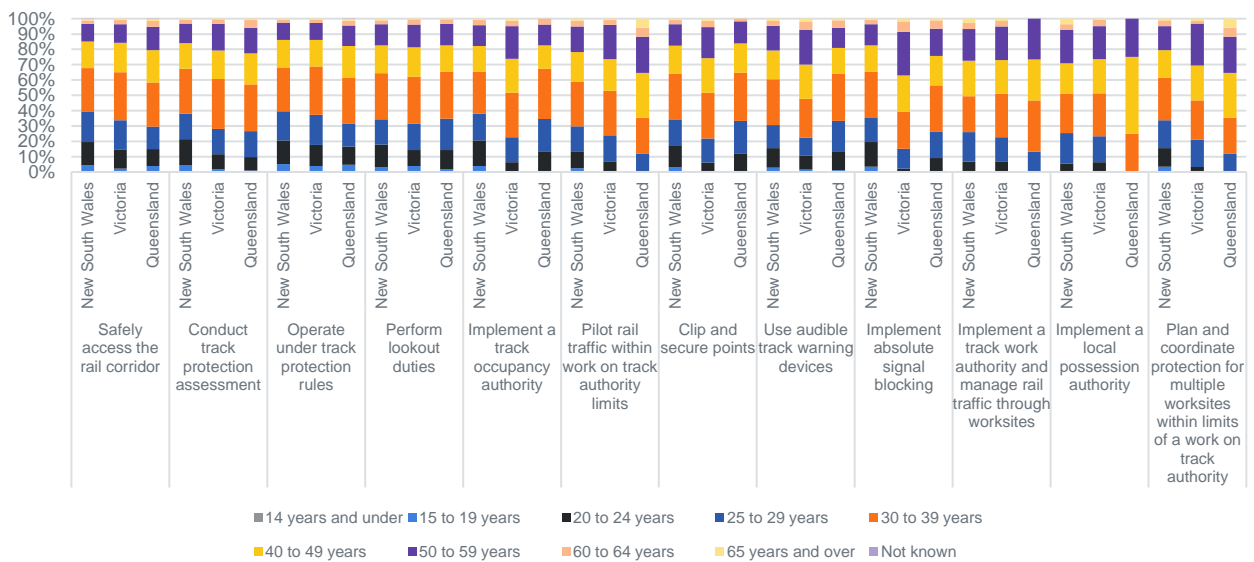
Around 63% of total enrolments in the 12 units were by people under 40 years of age. However, there was some variation in the relative proportions of age groups across different units. For example, this share was below 50% for *Implement a track work authority and manage rail traffic through worksites* and *Implement a local possession authority*, which are two units that are required for more advanced track protection officer job roles that require more experience.

An analysis of the results by unit and jurisdiction (for the three large east coast states) shows that NSW tended to have a slightly higher share of people enrolling who were under the age of 30 or 40 for most units than the two other jurisdictions, albeit with some exceptions.

Share of enrolments by unit and age group

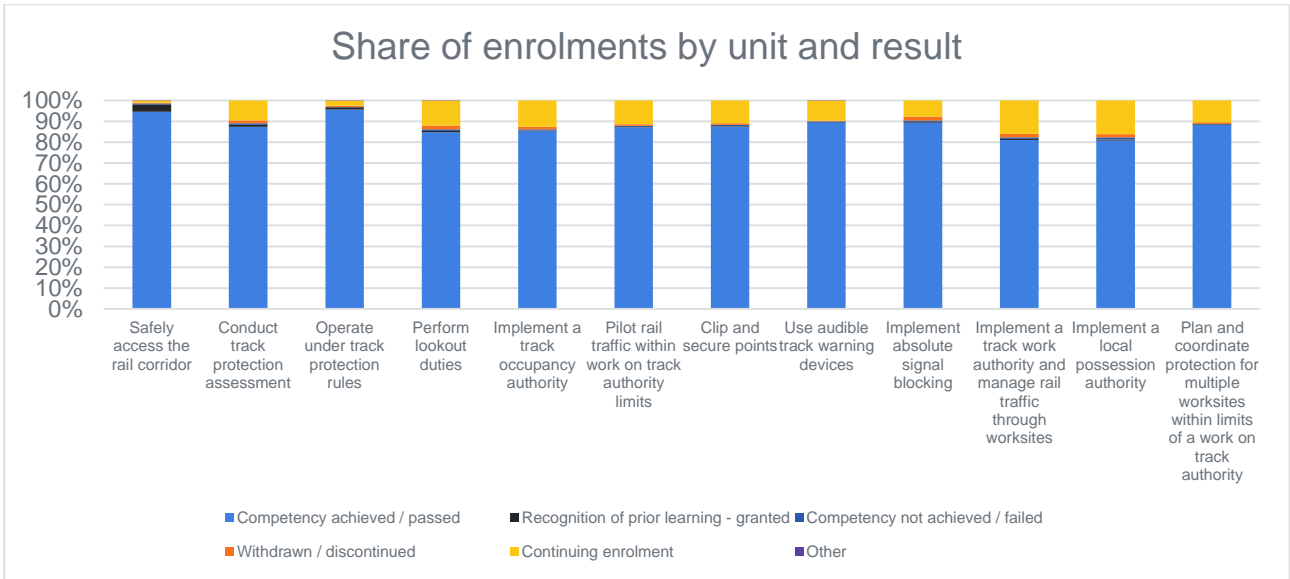


Share of enrolments by unit, age group and jurisdiction

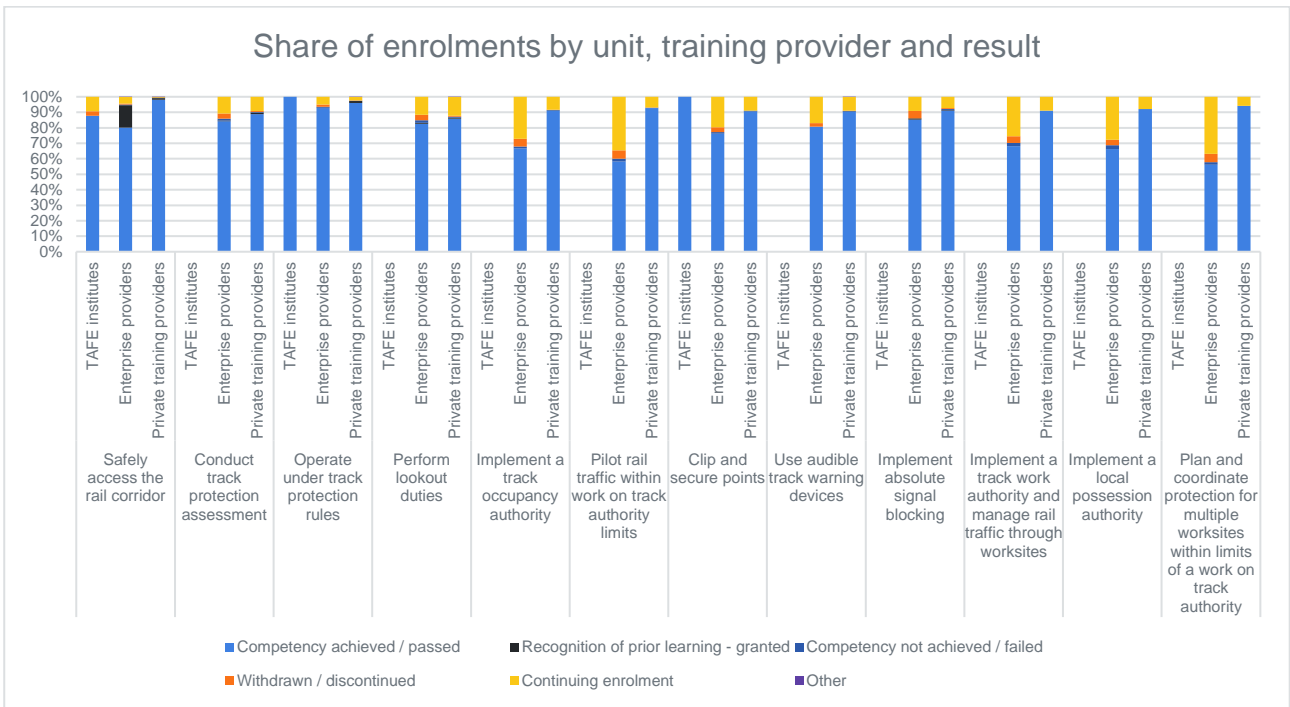


Comparing the results of enrolments across the 12 units in aggregate, around 93% of enrolments had passes, with 3% receiving recognition of prior learning, 3% continuing enrolments, and relatively small numbers across the remaining results categories. There was some variation across units, with most of the recognition of prior learning occurring for *Safely access the rail corridor*. The share of continuing enrolments tended to be higher, at around 16%, for units required for more advanced track protection job roles, such as *Implement a track work authority and manage rail traffic through worksites* and *Implement a local possession authority*.

The continuing enrolment share was generally higher for female than male students, and this was the case for almost all of the 12 analysed units.

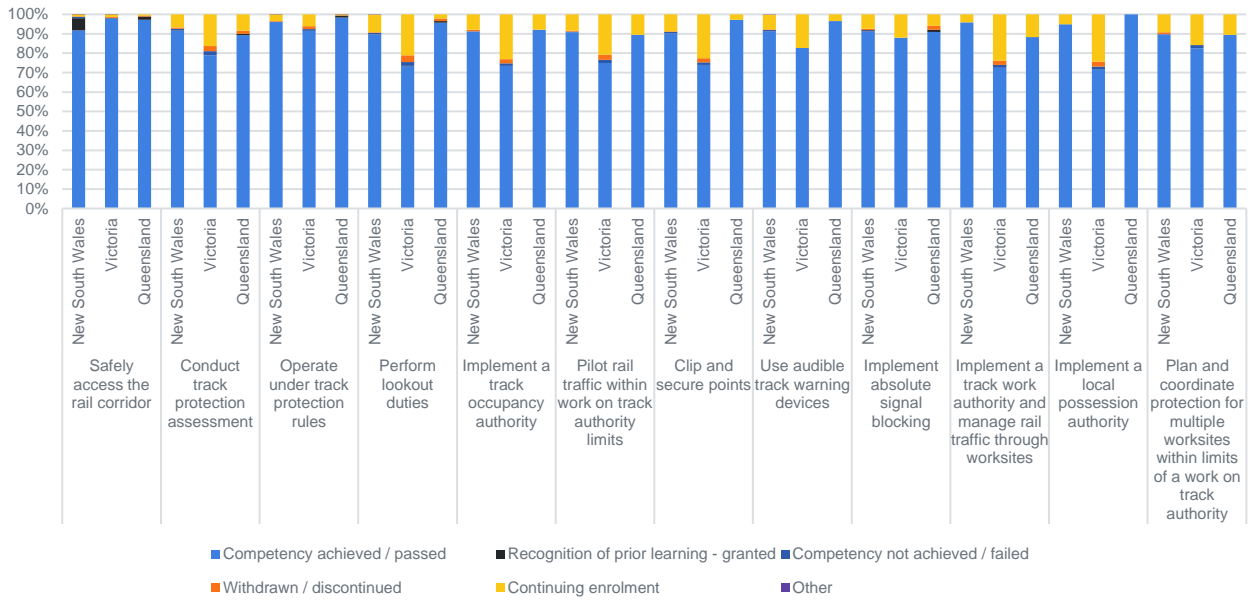


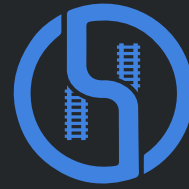
The results also varied somewhat across training provider types. For most of the units, Enterprise providers had higher rates of continuing enrolments and withdrawals than private training providers.



There were also some differences when comparing results across jurisdictions. For many of the units, Victoria had higher shares of continuing enrolments and withdrawals than the other two large east coast states.

Share of enrolments by unit and result for selected jurisdictions





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