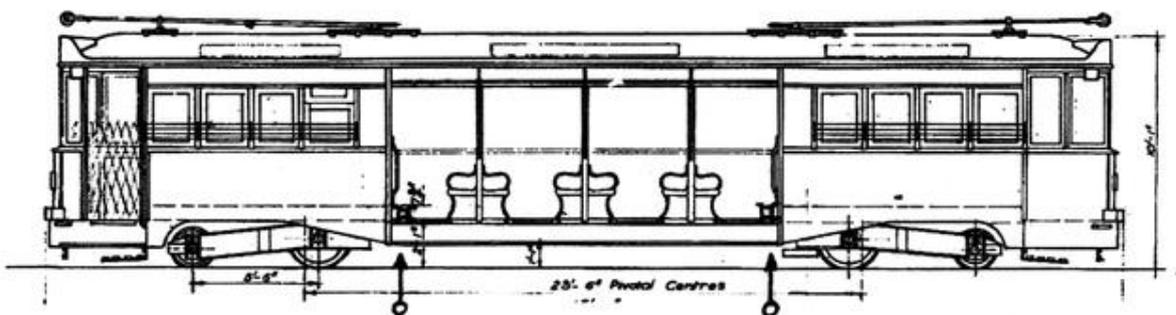


Mass of Flames

It was a spring day in Brisbane on Monday 6 September 1943, Brisbane was in the middle of an invasion by the US military with army camps and depot springing up in areas all around Brisbane. Salisbury on the south side of Brisbane was a hive of activity with many factories supplying the war effort.

Located on Compton Road which is now called Evans Road just west of the corner with Tarragindi Road was the Salisbury Tram Terminus for the tramline which ran from Salisbury through Moorooka, Annerley and Gabba into the city. This tram line was hastily extended from Moorooka to Salisbury in September 1941 to convene all the workers to the factories which sprung up in the Salisbury area including munitions factories.

On this day at the Salisbury Tram Terminus was Brisbane City Council tramcar 289, a drop centre type tram which had a layout of a driver/motorman platform at each end, an enclosed cabin at each end and a centre open section. The tramcar was constructed with an external steel frame but all the inside of the tramcar was timber including the floors, seats and ceiling. Tramcar 289 was licensed to carry 110 passengers which included 60 seated and 50 standing.



As the tramcar sat at the terminus Drop Centre Tram with the Motorman William John Cull and Conductress Clarice Edwards (because of the wartime man shortage in 1942 the Brisbane City Council hired about 400 conductresses for the duration of the war) The tramcar was loaded with mostly young females

who had just finished their shifts at the munitions factories in the Salisbury area and were looking forward to getting home for tea and a rest.

Soon after 5 pm tramcar 289 departed the Salisbury Tram Terminus with its load of 100 passengers and headed inbound towards the city. The tramcar passes through Moorooka Shopping Area and was heading down Beaudesert Road towards Ipswich Road when the tram was opposite Colbrook Street (now Colebrook Avenue), the motorman noticed a 12-wheel American Army truck coming down Ipswich Rd and turning into Beaudesert Rd ¹.

The Collision

Motorman Cullen noticed that the army truck was travelling on the inbound tramline at about 30 mph. At this point he applied the brakes to the tram and started clanging the bell as a warning but the US Army truck continued on hitting the right-hand bumper of the tram then bouncing away and then hitting the side front cabin area of the tram.

A witness stated that within a few seconds of the accident the 40-gallon petrol tank of the US Army truck exploded and suddenly bursting into flames with the blazing petrol splashed in all directions causing the front of the tram to become a mess of flames.

The conductress who was in the centre of the tram was flung on her back onto the roadway with a witness reporting that the women passengers with their hair and clothing alight struggled to get out of the front cabin area of the tram.

The motorman after his initial shock tried to open the doorway to the front cabin area which was behind him but this doorway was jammed, so he jumped out of the tram and ran around to the open centre area of the tram. He then accessed the front cabin from the open centre section and started to drag the startled women out of the burning front cabin section, in doing so he also received burns to his hands.

Sergeant H.E. Brown attached to the Roma Street Police, stated he was the first police officer on the scene. As the outbound tram on which Sgt Brown was a passenger passed the Junction Hotel at 5.15 p.m. (about 1.4 mile from scene), he noticed a cloud of black smoke rising in the direction of Moorooka. Later, he saw the fire brigade playing water on a stationary tram on the inbound tram line and gave assisted in helping women out of the tram.

After the first shock of the accident had passed many of the injured women tried to assist the other women who had received more severe burns. Also, people from nearby homes and shops assisted in smothering the burning clothing of the women with blankets and bags and then assisted them towards the Moorooka Ambulance Station which was located facing the junction of the Beaudesert and Ipswich roads.

The US Army truck driver and his companion escaped from the cabin of the burning truck with one of them running down the street with his clothing ablaze and was thrown to the ground and rolled over until this extinguished the burning clothing.



DEATH TRAM : Charred and battered cabin of the Moorooka tram in which two persons were burned to death and 24 injured late yesterday afternoon.

Photo from Brisbane Courier-Mail Tuesday
7 September 1943 page 3

A woman who appeared to have been knocked down by the crowd in the front cabin near the rear door was discovered and rushed to hospital by ambulance car but died on the way to hospital.

After all the injured women were cleared from the tram it was discovered that one body still remained partially beneath a seat in the front cabin area of the tram. It was also reported a total of 24 people were injured mainly all of these women were war workers returning home after work. ²

The next day The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) newspaper ran a front-page article about the accident with the head line “FIRE IN TRAM KILLS TWO”

In the article it stated the women who escaped from the tram had little of their clothing and hair left. This must have been a terrifying scene for all involved.

There were many heroes that day including the Fire Brigade and Ambulance Brigade with the newspaper running the story of what had occurred at the local ambulance station

Moorooka Ambulance Station

Moorooka Ambulance station officer in charge turned the station into a clearing and dressing station using his ARP stretchers and blankets and his wife who was a nursing sister assisted him in dressing burns until help came from headquarters.

Many of the women were escorted into the ambulance station with burnt about the face and with coats and bags wrapped around them. It was reported that many of the burns were so severe with blistering skin hanging from their face and limbs.

The women with the most severe burns appeared to be most stoic with one young woman with both legs and hands and face burnt did not utter a word of complaint as she was attended to. ³

More detail of the scene at the Moorooka Ambulance station was layout at the third day of the Inquiry into the accident see page 14.

The Women

The Two Women killed and others listed in various states

The newspaper on the Wednesday supply details of two women killed in the accident and were identified by relatives. They were: — Revena May White (in the list of injured in the newspaper her first name was given as Lavina), 24, single, 115 Wellington Road, East Brisbane, war worker.

Margaret Florence "Peggy" Bryce, 20, single, Young Street, Milton, war worker. (On the Queensland BDM site her name is given as Florence Margaret Bryce).

The former died in an ambulance on the way to hospital, and the other's body was found beneath a seat in the front cabin of the tram.

It was also reported in the newspapers that one person was on danger list, seven were seriously ill, and the condition of 15 others was satisfactory.

“Condition of Phyllis Ellen Florence Cooper, 29, single, Brisbane Street, Bulimba, who was admitted to the Mater Hospital with severe burns to the face, hands, and legs, is reported to be dangerous. (She died on Saturday 2 October 1943, succumbed to her injuries, 4th Death from the accident⁴)

Those in a serious condition are at Mater Hospital. —

Joan Mercy Hall, 20, single, munitions worker, Welwyn Crescent, Coorparoo, fractured skull, laceration to scalp;

Ann Mary Tully, 32, single, munitions worker, Irvine Street, Ascot, burns on face and hands;

Maureen Mary Patricia McCormack, 24, Denham Street, Greenslopes, severe burns to face, hands, and legs (in the list of injured in the newspaper her first name was given only as Patricia) (in 1944 address given as Amelia Street, Coorparoo);

Jessie Ferguson, 24, single, munitions worker, Merton Road, South Brisbane, burns to face, hands and legs, and severe shock.

Those in a serious condition are at the Brisbane General Hospital. —

Lorna Vivian Clunes, 22, single, munitions worker, Brassey Street, Fairfield, severe burns to face, hands, legs, and severe shock;

Violet Elizabeth Golton, 27, single, munitions worker, Fortescue Street, Spring Hill, burns to face, and shock (in the list of injured in the newspaper her surname was given as Goulton);

Heatherbel Jean O'Brien, 26, single, Raven Street, Hill End, burns to legs and arms, and shock. (In the list of injured in the newspaper her first name was given as Heather), (She died on Friday morning 22 October 1943, succumbed to her injuries, 5th Death from the accident⁵);

The injured listed at were satisfactory:

Mavis Therese Kerr, 23, single, munitions worker, Hampton Road (Street), Woolloongabba, severe laceration right leg, probable fracture of right leg, and shock;

Jean Burns, 27, single, Bennett's Road, Coorparoo, burns on left side of neck, severe shock;

Myrtle Elizabeth Beeston, 25, single, munitions worker, Cartwright Street, Windsor, contusions on fore head, and shock;

Gyneth Alice Boulter, 28, single, munitions worker, Dornoch Terrace, South Brisbane, severe burns face and hands, severe shock. (In the list of injured in the newspaper her name and age were given as Gwneth Vaulta, 22, single, Dornoch Terrace, West End);

Kathleen McCormack, 28, single, Denham Street, Greenslopes, burns to face, neck, both hands and legs;

Enid May Voss, 28, married, munitions worker, Lade Street, Greenslopes, laceration on nose;

Eva May Goody, burns to left hand and both ankles;

Clarice. Edwards, 36, married, Conductress, Trafalgar Street, Woolloongabba, severe shock.
Taken home;

William John Cull, 43, Motorman, Longland Street, East Brisbane, burns on face, and shock.
Taken home;

Zelpha Pearl Crawford, 30, single, munitions worker, Ridge Street, Highgate Hill, severe
burns both hands and face;

Florence Eleana Watson, 34, single, Wickham Terrace, City, laceration on forehead, shock;

Joyce Thurlow, 25, single, munitions worker, Vowles Street, Red Hill, burns on right hand
and face, shock;

Vera McIntosh, 29, single, Sidon Street, South Brisbane, severe shock;

Josephine Annie Ballantine, 24, married, wife of Captain R. L. Ballantine, A.I.F., Vulture
Street, South Brisbane, severe burns to face, both legs, and arms. (In the list of injured in the
newspaper her surname was given as Valentine) (She died on Thursday morning 30
September 1943, succumbed to her injuries 3rd death from the accident⁶).

The persons listed in the Writes but not in the list of injured in the newspaper in September
1943 were:

Margaret Mary Leonard, wife of Edward Victor Leonard, of Herbert Street, Annerley;

Mrs Anne Maria Dunne, munitions worker, of Melbourne Street, South Brisbane.

Both occupants of the truck US Army Private Hugh James Copland and Sergeant Peter B.
Bialas were seriously injured and were taken to a military hospital.”⁷



Photo of Tramcar 289 after
the accident when the
tramcar had been towed to
Stop 34, outside Bullocks
Building, Moorooka
Shopping Area

Photo by Green Studios
from the Brisbane Tramway
Museum Archives T289/1

The Aftermath

Compensation Move

Any workers at the factory where the women worked were not entitled to compensation for injuries received while travelling to and from work because they work for the Commonwealth Government and they came under Commonwealth compensation laws which at that time did not cover traveling to or from work.

On Tuesday 7 September a mass meeting was held at the factory where the victims of the accident were employed, with about 2,000 war workers and was addressed by the Iron Workers Union Secretary Mr A. MacDonald who was speaking on behalf of the combined Unions at the factory. The meeting decided to rise with the Commonwealth to have the Commonwealth Compensation Act amended to bring it in line with the Queensland Government Act for such compensation and to take up with the Federal Government the question of compensation for the people involved in the accident or their dependants.

It was also agreed at the meeting to seek proper system of traffic supervision and asked the allied authorities to patrol busy sections of Ipswich and Beaudesert Roads ⁸.

Ex:Diggers' View

On the same day of the mass meeting, a meeting of the Diggers Association expressed alarm at the number of fatal accidents involving military vehicles.

The meeting unanimously agreed to draw the attention of the Minister of Transport, Mr Lawson to the numerous traffic accidents involving trucks and cars in Queensland and to request rigid precautions should be instituted to ensure the safety of the public ⁹.

Tighter Control on Road Traffic

Mr Carroll the Police Commissioner presided over a conference of civil police, tramway, and military authorities held on Friday 10 September with the conference implementing of tighter traffic control as reported in the Brisbane Courier Mail Newspaper on Saturday.

As a result of this meeting additional police traffic patrols was increased along Ipswich and Beaudesert Roads and addition extra vigilance would be exercised

by the Military Traffic Police. Mr. Carroll said “that a large number of civilian police motor vehicle patrols and fighting service patrols already operated throughout the city. However, accidents could not be- avoided unless drivers generally were more careful.”

It was reported in the same article that the mobile section of the Provost Corps covered quite a lot of ground in daily patrols, and had proved an effective check on speeding and careless driving. Speed was controlled, and those caught exceeding the limits were not spared in the punishment awarded.

Also, at the same time a deposition from Trade and Labour Council to the Health and Home Affairs Minister (Mr Hanion) was received requesting the holding of a conference to consider how better control traffic could be obtained.

Mr. Hanlon said later that he had told the delegates that above conference with the Police Commissioner was being held. He believed that methods would be devised to deal with the comparatively few 'flash' drivers who caused most accidents.¹⁰

Just before this conference with the Police Commissioner was held a second tram-truck collision occurred near the scene of Monday's fatal tram-truck collision.

2nd Tram-Truck Collision

On this heavy fog morning of the 10 September 1943(Friday), another tram-truck collision occurred at the intersection of Ipswich Road and South Terrace, Yeronga, about 200 yards from the scene of the fatal tram-truck collision on Monday 6 September.

The circumstances of this morning's accident were similar to those of the previous collision on 6 September when two were killed and 21 others injured.

At 6.33 o'clock today an inbound military truck collided with an outbound Salisbury Tramcar 219 (same design as tramcar 289). The military truck smashed the front cabin area of the tramcar, in which the seven injured passengers were seated.

A big petrol tank was torn off the side of the military truck and crushed into a mass of metal about half its normal size with the tram passengers being sprayed with petrol but fortunately it did not ignite and flowed across the roadway into the gutter. Police report that had it done so the consequences may have been fatal.

The upper body work of the military truck including the front mudguard and other parts of the chassis were severely damaged. The damage was so bad at the truck had to be towed away

The tram was damaged extensively with pieces of woodwork and glass scattered for 20 yards along the road and seats in the cabin splintered into many pieces. The tram was able to be driven back to the Ipswich Road Depot under its own power from the undamaged end.

The impact threw tram passengers from their seats, but only two were injured seriously enough to be admitted to the Mater Hospital. The other five received treatment at the hospital, but were allowed to go home.

The injured are:

Mrs Donna Estelle Selons Hoskins, 32, married, Blackwood Road, Manly, fractured left ribs, lacerated right temple, abdominal injuries, shock, condition serious, but slightly improved last night, Admitted to the Mater Hospital;

Miss Kathleen Gair, 27, single. Lyndon Street, Dutton Park, laceration over left eyebrow, injury to right hip shock, condition satisfactory, Admitted to the Mater Hospital;

Henry George Blake, 22, single, Bowen Street, Annerley, fractured nose, shock, condition satisfactory;

Edith Adelaide Underwood, 31, single, Hamlet Terrace, Annerley, lacerations to the right foot, left side of head and shock;

Hilda Lightbody, 30, single, King Street, Thompson Estate, abrasions to face and left leg and shock;

Annie Davis, 39, single, Brisbane Street, Dutton Park minor abrasions to face and legs;

Mrs Doreen Beauchester, 30, married, Conductress, of Burlington Street, East Brisbane lacerations to the scalp, and shock (In a list of injured in a newspaper her surname was given as Buchester);

William John Lucas, Shafston Avenue, Kangaroo Point, Motorman/driver of tram, lacerations to right hand.

The driver of the truck, were not injured.

After receiving treatment for her injuries, Miss Davis returned to the scene of the accident to give details to the police before going on to her work.

"It was the narrowest escape I've ever had, and I think we are all lucky to be alive," Miss Davis said.

Had Money for Other Smash Victims

Also, in tramcar 219 a male passenger, who was sitting just behind the smashed cabin, assisted Mrs Hoskins from the tram and she was rushed to the Mater Hospital in a private car with the other injured passengers taken to the hospital by the ambulance.

Yesterday Mrs Hoskins had taken up a collection at her place of employment for the victims of the Monday's fatal tram smash. She was carrying this money in her bag when this accident occurred this morning and when she reached the hospital, she was more worried about what had happened to her bag than about her injuries. Mrs Hoskins bag was subsequently found with the contents intact and return to her.

Tram traffic was dislocated for 20 minutes, and while the tram line was being cleared a squad of police under Sergeant J. S. Kirkwood, of Stephens, and Sergeant Koch, of the Traffic Department, diverted road traffic to side streets.

Tram schedules on the Salisbury line, however, were not restored to normal for about an hour¹.



This picture shows the damage to the front cabin of the tram involved in this morning's smash.

Photo from Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld), Friday 10 September 1943, page 2

The Treatment

The treatment used for people burned in the tram-truck collision of the 6th September was based on methods discovered and used successfully for people burned in the Coconut Grove fire, in Boston, U.S.A., in October 1942. Injuries are cleaned under anaesthetic, and strips of mosquito netting impregnated with Vaseline and acriflavine (an antiseptic used instead of iodine) were applied. Army doctors have used this method for some months before this collision on war burnt victims.¹²

Jail for U.S. Driver

The US army truck driver involved in the 6th September tram-truck collision incident was Private Hugh James Copland and he face two court martial trials, the first one on the 1st October 1943 and the second on the 18th October 1943.

Private Copland was sentenced to a total of Six years' imprisonment with hard labour and was ordered to be dishonourably discharged from the service and to forfeit all pay and allowances due to him.

That the first court martial Private Copland was charged with manslaughter in respect to the deaths of Miss White and Miss Bryce and received a sentence of 3 years imprisonment with hard labour. On October 18th court martial Private Copland was again charged with manslaughter of the third and fourth victims Mrs Ballentine and Miss Cooper and received a sentence of 3 years imprisonment with hard labour. Both sentences were to be served cumulative¹³.

The Inquiry

Moorooka 6th September 1943 Smash Inquiry

First Day of the Inquiry

Four months after the first truck/tram accident of September 6, 1943, a Coroner's inquiry was held in Brisbane from Tuesday 11 January to Thursday 13 January 1944 in front of the City Coroner Mr. J. J. Leahy.

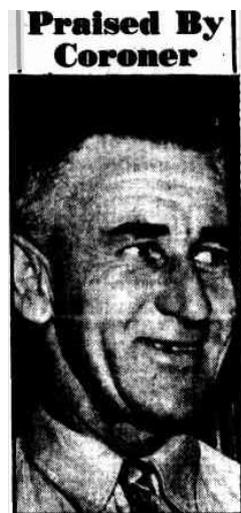
At the inquiry, Mr. M. R. Smith appeared for the Brisbane Tramways Department, Lieutenant E. H. Charles for the Claims Board of the US Army, Mr

J. D. McGill for the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor's Department and Detective Senior-Sergeant T. J. Lloyd, of the C.I.B., conducted the inquiry and examined the witnesses.

Mr Max Julius (instructed by Cyril J. Murphy) appeared for the Ironworkers' Union and also appeared for all the injured who have been called as witnesses.

On the first day of the inquiry the Telegraph Newspaper reported the evidence of the Tram Driver, Conductress of the tram, Mrs Hoban, Miss Golton, Ferguson and Thurlow. Below is the reported evidence of each of these persons.

Burst into Flames



"You acted very promptly and did good work" the City Coroner (Mr J. J. Leahy) told tram driver William John Cull, at the conclusion of his evidence. "I only did what anybody, else would have done," Cull said. "When the tram burst into flames, I was rooted to the spot for a moment and couldn't move," Cull said in evidence. "Then I saw two girls lying across one another in the front cabin. I tried to open the cabin door but it jammed, so I rushed round into the drop centre. Two girls were jammed in the door. I pulled them out and went on into the cabin. The passengers were panicking, trying to get through the window. I called 'Don t panic!' Three girls were lying on the floor and I pulled them out. Then I tried to get back too two girls who were still in the cabin, but I was blocked. The heat was terrific and the fire still raging." Cull said that in his opinion, the accident was due to the negligence of the American soldier, who was driving the truck on the wrong side of the road. (photo from The Courier-Mail - Brisbane - 12 Jan 1944)

Running on Fire

"Everybody was running on fire," said Clarice Edwards, Conductress of the tram. "I saw fire spraying down on everybody's heads, falling down in cascades. I was thrown out of the tram by the impact of the collision and when I tried to get up, I was knocked down by people trying to get out of the tram on to the footpath. People were rushing everywhere, a number of them on fire. Somebody told me to get away, but I thought it was my duty to stay. I helped to get a number of people on to the footpath and then somebody led me away and I was given a cup of tea in a shop."

Miriam Jessie Hoban (married), of Milton, said she was the sister of the deceased Margaret Florence Bryce, who was resided with her at the time. On the evening of September 6 her sister failed to come home from work. Later that night Mrs Hoban identified her sister's body at a mortuary in the Valley with the

body burned beyond recognition. Mrs Hoban could only identified her sister by the teeth and by remnants of clothing.

Violet Elizabeth Golton, Spring Hill, a passenger in the tram, said she saw a truck come straight at the tram and hit it. Miss Golton was burnt on the face and hands when both the tram and the truck burst into flames. In reply to the Coroner, Miss Golton said the union she belonged to was handling any claims against the United States Army.

Jessie Ferguson, another passenger, said she was trapped in the front cabin of the tram with the door jammed and her hands so badly burned she couldn't even try to open it. "Everything went black," she said. "The conductress got me out and I was taken to a shop where I collapsed." Miss Ferguson said she was burnt on the face, hands, and head. She was in hospital for a month and was unable to go to work and she was still going to hospital daily for massage.

Trapped in Cabin

Joyce Thurlow, another passenger, said she heard a bump, jumped to her feet, and on looking out saw an American running away with his clothes on fire and at the same time the tram went up in flames. Miss Thurlow said she climbed up on the seat and jumped out the window of the tram. She had been off work for 12 weeks with a burnt right hand and nose. ¹⁴



Some of the witnesses who attended the inquest yesterday into the tram-truck smash at Mooreooka, in which five persons lost their lives. From left: Fireman F. King, Lorne Vivian Clunes, Joyce Thurlow, Mavis Kerr, Maureen Patricia McCormack and Joan Hall.

Photo from Courier-Mail (Brisbane), Wednesday, 12 January 1944, page 3 of witnesses who attended the 11 January 1944 inquest.

On Second Day of the Inquiry

On the second day of the inquiry the Telegraph Newspaper reported the evidence of another Tramway motorman, Mr McLellan, Mr Henricksen and Mr White. Below is the reported evidence of each of these persons.

Leslie McDougall (tramway motorman.) stated in evidence in the Coroner's Court today that the tram he was driving had narrowly missed being hit by the same military truck that a few seconds later was involved in a smash with another tram that resulted in the death of five people.

On the Wrong Side

Leslie McDougall said the tram of which he was the motorman, left the Salisbury terminus just before the ill-fated tram that was involved in the accident. As his tram approached the corner of Ipswich and Beaudesert Roads, he saw two military trucks coming towards him, one was on the wrong side of the road.

"As he approached my tram," Mr. McDougall said, "the driver swerved away to avoid me. He was so close I brought the tram to a standstill thinking we were sure to be hit." "After the tram stop the passengers who got to their feet sang out 'He's missed us.'" "The next thing I heard was somebody in the cabin shout 'He's got the tram behind.'"

In reply to the Coroner, Mr. McDougall said: "The truck driver got off the inbound tram line to dodge me, and then got on to it again to hit the tram behind. The street was empty of other traffic and he thought the truck was travelling about 30 m.p.h."

David McLellan, boilermaker, employed by Evans, Deakin, and Co., Ltd, said "that he was a passenger on the tram. He thought the fire was due to the truck hitting the tram and the petrol from the truck spraying on to the tram. Steel to steel would always cause a spark, and that would cause petrol to ignite".

Trevor Lloyd Henricksen, 17-year-old aircraft assistant, employed at Archerfield, said "that he was waiting for an inbound tram when the accident occurred. I saw passengers trying to get out of the front cabin screaming and pushing each other, Girls were running about on fire. I took off my overcoat and wrapped it around one girl, putting out the flames."

Mr. Henricksen said he had given evidence at a court-martial at which an American soldier called Hugh James Copeland, alleged to be the driver of the truck concerned in the accident, had appeared on three charges of manslaughter.

Father's Search

Marvel Charles Paul White, father of Ravena May White, said: "My daughter left home at 6 a.m. on September 6 and I heard nothing of her until I saw her next day at the morgue. When she did not come home at night, I thought she had gone to spend the night at a friend's place and next morning, I rang the matron of the works. When I learned she had not arrived at work. I went to the boarding-house where her friend stayed and from there to the Police CIB. Police Sub-inspector Scott took me down to the morgue in the Valley and there I identified my daughter. She was badly burned and at first, I was so unhinged I failed to recognise her, but later, with the assistance of Sub-inspector Scott, I knew it was my daughter. The police had done all they could to identify her but failed."

Mr. White said "he was an invalid and had three sons in the services. His wife was also an invalid". In reply to Mr Julius, Mr. White said "that he had put the matter of compensation into the hands of his solicitor on October 11, but to date had not received any compensation".

Mr Leahy (to Mr McGill): "Have you any idea when this compensation is likely to be paid-if at all"?

Mr McGill: "I can't answer that, your Worship".

Mr Leahy: "And three months have elapsed since the application was made".¹⁵

Third Day of the Inquiry

On the third day of the inquiry the Telegraph Newspaper reported the evidence of Mr Hamilton, Moorooka Ambulance Station - Mr Taylor, Eva May Goody, Mr O'Brien and the American's Evidence. Below is the reported evidence of each of these persons.

Hugh Hamilton, Arthur Terrace, Red Hill, a bus driver of 10 years' experience who was an eye-witness of the accident gave evidence that the military truck that collided with the tram at Moorooka was travelling down the hill between the two sets of tram rails at a speed which he estimated at 50 miles an hour (80 kph).

Moorooka Ambulance Station

A graphic account of the scene at the Moorooka Ambulance Station at the time of the accident was given by Harry Norman Taylor, the officer in charge.

"I was on duty at the Ambulance Station," Taylor said, "when I heard a crash and an explosion. Looking out I saw a tram on fire with people jumping out on to the roadway".

"I started up the ambulance car but before I could get it out the injured began to arrive at the station, so I hurried to prepare the casualty room.

"I then rang the Brisbane Centre for help, and a number of cars and men were immediately dispatched.

"Numbers of people came in and offered their help and with the assistance of these and my wife, who is a trained nurse, we set to work.

"After things were under control a bit, a man came in to say there was a girl in the front cabin of the tram who was still alive.

"Bearer Miller, a man called Yates, and I, hurried to the scene.

"The girl was badly burned, lying on the right-hand side of the front cabin, partly under the seat.

"When we attempted to lift her out, we found another woman lying underneath her on the floor.

"We put the girl, who was still alive, into the ambulance, and drove her to the Mater Hospital. There a doctor pronounced life extinct.

"The usual procedure would have been to take the body to the city morgue, but because of the circumstances I asked the matron if we could put her in the hospital mortuary.

"Permission was granted, and we hurried back to the scene of the accident to render further assistance."

Others

Eva May Goody, sergeant in the WAAAF (*Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force*), a passenger in the tram, said she was knocked unconscious when the crash occurred.

"When I came to my senses," Ms Goody said, "the tram was on fire. I immediately dived through the window on to the street. Two men tried to catch me but I fell flat on the concrete."

Ms Goody said she suffered a broken arm and burns on the arms and legs and she was still a patient at a military hospital.

Daniel Roy O'Brien, father of Heatherbell O'Brien, said his daughter, who was 25, lingered in the hospital for nearly seven weeks before she died. During the whole of that time she never mentioned the accident. "She was too ill," Mr. O'Brien said.

American's Evidence

Douglas Smith Moodie, an American sergeant, attached to the investigation section of the US Provost Marshal's Office, said he had been detailed to investigate the collision. With Detective McNicholl, of the Brisbane CIB, and other US personnel, he interviewed Private Hugh James Copeland and Sergeant Peter Bialas. Private Copeland had admitted that he was the driver of the truck

and had made a statement in witness's presence. This alleged statement was read out by the Coroner in the court.

. Extracts were as follows: — "My name is Hugh James Copeland. At 11 hours on September 6 accompanied by Sergeant Peter R. Bialas. I left camp driving truck No. 4178964. I was en route to town with laundry. We went to the MP post about 12.30. The sergeant and I parted and met again at 4.30 in the afternoon. Driving back to the camp we were going at approximately 25 mph. We turned left on to Beaudesert Road.

"I thought the streets were wet. The light was hazy at that time. The truck brakes were good and I saw the tram about a block away. I was not quite in the middle of the street. There was a car on my left. There was a motor cycle which came in front of me before I got to the tram. I turned sharp to the left to miss the motor cycle. My truck skidded to the right for about 10 yards and collided with the tram. I do not remember whether I applied my brakes or not before I collided with the tram. I had not been drinking that afternoon. . . . Signed Hugh James Copeland."

Sgt Moodie in the inquiry said investigations which witness had made showed that Private Copeland and Sergeant Bialas had a couple of drinks when they first arrived in town and later when they met at 4.30pm each had three glasses of beer and that Sergeant Peter Bialas was not available to give evidence

The Coroner: "Is Private Copeland still a member of the US Army"?

Lieutenant Charles (for the US Army) objected to the question. The Coroner overruled the objection.

The Coroner to Lt, Charles: "Did you tell Sgt Moodie not to answer"?

Lt. Charles: "Yes".

The Coroner: "You are only granted permission to be in this Court. You are not running it. I am surprised at an officer of your standing".

Sgt Moodie said he understood Private Copeland had received dishonourable discharge from the US Army.

In reply to Mr Julius, Sgt Moodie said he had accepted Sgt Bialas's statement about the amount of drink the men had taken but they may have had more to drink. He could find no trace of the car mentioned in Private Copeland's statement, or of the motor cycle.

Also, Sgt Moodie himself a lawyer stated, as far as he knew no charges of grievous bodily harm were brought against Private Copeland and he knew of no such offence in American law.

Sgt Moodie said he was not at liberty to say where Private Copeland was now, but he was not within the Commonwealth of Australia.

Replying further to Mr Julius, Sgt Moodie said that following the accident a conference was held between the United States and Australian authorities. He did not feel himself competent to say whether Australian civilian police had any control over American military traffic or not.

Mr Julius: "If a member of the US Forces were driving recklessly, could an Australian patrol car stop him?"

Sgt Moodie: "I have an opinion about that but I have no authority to answer."

Mr Julius: "Have the Australian civil police authority to deal with anyone, including members of the American Military Forces, who commits a breach of the laws of the Commonwealth?"

Sgt Moodie: "I am not prepared to discuss it."

Describing an interview, he had with Private Copeland in a US military hospital in Brisbane, Detective McNicholl said Private Copeland told him that after he left Sgt Bialas in town and went to a picture theatre, but on discovering he had seen the programme before came out and wandered about the streets until it was time to meet Sgt Bialas again. Private Copeland said he had taken no liquor.

No One Else Blamed

Detective McNicholl said "As a result of extensive investigations, I can definitely say that Private Copeland was responsible for the terrible tragedy, and that no person or persons other than he were in any way to blame."

"The accident was due to Private Copeland's recklessness and negligence, and I am inclined to think that he was probably under the influence of liquor at the material time."

"If he was not intoxicated as a result of liquor, he was still negligent and showed a wanton disregard for his own safety and the safety of others."

"There is no doubt there was no traffic on the roadway in the vicinity of the collision which would have obscured Private Copeland's view." ¹⁶

The Finding of the Inquiry

On Thursday 13 January 1944 Mr Leahy the City Coroner handed down his finding on the inquiry of the truck/tram smash of the 6th September 1943. Mr Leahy finding the driver of the American military truck was Negligent.

The following is from an article in the Courier-Mail newspaper on Friday 14 January 1944.

Mr. Leahy, in his finding, said that Private Copeland, in driving on the incorrect driving side of the road, rendered avoidance of a crash inescapable.

Mr. Leahy also found that the deaths of Revena May White, Josephine Ann Ballantine, Phyllis Ellen Florence Cooper, and Heatherbel Jean O'Brien were due to injuries, chiefly severe burns, and of Margaret Florence Bryce, to injuries to brain and skull, received when the American military truck collided with the tram car in which they were passengers, and the tram became enveloped in flames.

"The gravity of Private Copeland's negligence," said Mr. Leahy, "is emphasised by the fact, as the evidence discloses, that shortly before the collision he was driving on the wrong side of the road, and narrowly escaped colliding with an immediately preceding tramcar by swinging from his course on to his correct driving side and then after he passed the tram swinging back again on to the inbound tram track in the face of the oncoming tram with which he collided."



**Detective B.
McNicholl.**

Detective Constable Bernard McNicholl, of the Brisbane C.I.B., was congratulated by the Coroner for his help in preparing a plan of the ill-fated tram, and the way the passengers were seated at the time of the crash, and in collecting evidence. (photo - Courier-Mail (Brisbane), Friday 14 January 1944, page 3)

"As a result of my inquiries," said Detective McNicholl in evidence yesterday, and in conjunction with Sgt. Moodie, of the American army, who assisted me materially, "I definitely say that the truck driven by Private Copeland was absolutely responsible for the tragedy, and that no person or persons other than he were in any way to blame.

Detective McNicholl said "I formed the opinion as the result of extensive inquiries, which involved interviewing 101 persons, that the collision was due to the recklessness and negligence of Private Copeland. I am inclined to think that he consumed four glasses of intoxicating liquor during the afternoon, and was probably under the influence of liquor. If he was not intoxicated, he was still negligent, and showed a wanton disregard for his own safety and the safety of others."

"There was no doubt," continued Detective McNicholl, "that there was no traffic on the road-way which would have obscured Private Copeland's view and prevented him from keeping a proper look out. Also, there was nothing to prevent Private Copeland from keeping to his correct side of the roadway, and as near as practicable to the footpath as stipulated by law. It was not raining, visibility was good, and it was daylight. U.S.A. Army signs were displayed on the road stating that army vehicles were not to exceed 25 miles per hour."

Also Detective McNicholl said "I think that immediately the truck came to a standstill there was a sudden back fire from the engine of the truck and this was caused by the engine suddenly stopping, and the light from that extended from the petrol tank to the flowing petrol

down along the tram line, and when it met the fire, which was already started as a result of the sudden impact, there was an explosion which caused the front portion of the tram to become an inferno."



Detective McNicholl said "that he had learned that the truck had been filled with 40 gallons of petrol the night before, and that five gallons would have been consumed between then and the time of the accident."

Also, Detective McNicholl said that 38 persons, including five who subsequently died, had been injured.

McNICHOL Bernard 3162 ID ca 1950
Photo from Queensland Police Museum

In reply to the Coroner, Detective McNicholl said "that the damage to the tram was estimated at £700, and the motor truck £300."

Cross-examined by Mr. Max Julius (instructed by Mr. C. J. Murphy), for relatives of all the deceased, except Ballantine, and members of the Munitions Union who were killed or injured, Sgt. Moodie said "that he could not disclose where Private Copeland was but he was not in Australia. He had formed the opinion that the motor car and the cycle as described by Private Copeland in his statement did not exist.¹⁷

U.S. Smash Victims Can Sue Fed. Govt

It was reported from Canberra on Friday that relatives of persons killed in accidents involving American troops can claim compensation against the Federal Government.

Government National Security Regulations relating to members of the Allied forces provide for this, according to the opinion of Federal legal authorities. Clarification of the position was given following the inquiry by the Brisbane Coroner into the fatal collision between an American Army truck and a tram car at Moorooka.

The Federal legal authorities also gave it as their opinion that Australian police could arrest members of the United States armed forces for breaches of civil laws, and might prosecute them unless the U.S. Army authorities made a specific request for the men concerned to be handed over to be dealt with by U.S. court martial. The Commonwealth Government, they said, had entered into an arrangement with the American Army whereby a man was handed over if the Army requested it.¹⁸

The Writs and Shock Death

17 Smash Writs Issued

On Monday, 17 January 1944, Mr. Cyril J. Murphy acting as solicitor for the plaintiff in each case issued 17 writs out of the Supreme Court Brisbane against the Commonwealth, arising from the two tram smashes at Moorooka on September 6 and 10. No amounts were specified for each writ. The 17 writs issued were on behalf of:

Lorna Vivian Clunes, Zelpha Pearl Crawford, Joan Hall, Joyce Thurlow, Florence Eleana Watson, Myrtle Elizabeth Beeston, Gynneth Alice Boulter, Margaret Mary Leonard, Violet Elizabeth Golton, Jessie Ferguson, Anne Maria Dunne, Mavis Therese Kerr, Ann Mary Tully, Maureen May Patricia McCormack, Enid May Voss, Edith Adelaide Underwood and Donna Estelle Selons Hosking. (Misses Underwood and Hoskins were injured in the second tram smash of September 10).

Writs were also issued on Tuesday, 18 January 1944 on behalf of relatives of four persons fatally injured in the tram smash of September 6 and are on behalf of

Mrs. Agnes Bryce, mother of Margaret Florence Bryce;

William Joseph Cooper, and Sarah Elizabeth Cooper, parents of Phyllis Ellen Florence Cooper;

Daniel Ray O'Brien and Alice Maud O'Brien, parents of Heatherbell Jean O'Brien;

and Mervil Charles Paul White and Olive Mabel White, parents of Revina May White. ¹⁹

£27,321 in Claims Against Commonwealth Government

In late May 1944, 22 new writs including statement of claims against the Commonwealth Government were issued on behalf of the persons injured, and relatives of those killed, in two tram accidents in September of 1943.

The writs contained claims totalling £27,321/8/- have been issued out of the Supreme Court by Brisbane solicitor. Mr. Cyril Murphy. The Commonwealth Government has admitted liability in respect of the claims for injuries.

Claims, which include in some cases injury, loss, of wages, hospital and medical fees, and loss of property, are: —

COMPLETE LIST Maureen Mary McCormack, £3720/11/6; Enid May Voss, £704/11/6; Lorna Vivian Clunes, £559/8/11; Zelpha Pearl Crawford, £2661; Joan Mercy Hall,

£593/18/9; Joyce Thurlow, £309/12/6; Florence Elena Watson, £1262/2/-; Myrtle Elizabeth Beeston, £267/3/6; Gyneth Alice Boulter, £2868/12/-; Margaret Mary Leonard, £411/19/9; Violet Elizabeth Golton, £601/3/6; Jessie Ferguson, £2628/13/6; Mavis Therese Kerr, £365/12/-; Ann Mary Tully, £3700; Anne Maria Dunne, £313/14/7; Edith Adelaide Underwood, £745/12/5; Donna Estelle Hosking, £307/11/9; Ravena May White (deed.), £900; Heatherbell Jean O'Brien (deed.), £1800; Margaret Florence Bryce (deed.), £900; Phyllis Helen Cooper (deed.), £1700. No statement or claim has yet been delivered in connection with the writ- on behalf of. Eva May Goody.²⁰

Medical examinations of the plaintiffs

The Commonwealth had asked for medical examinations of the plaintiffs in each writ, but the solicitor for the plaintiffs objected to any medical examination until the statements of claims had been lodged.

In consequence the medical examination did not start till May 31 and were not completed on all plaintiffs till June 25.

It was stated by Mr A. D. McGill, KC, that first offer in one of the claims were made on July 29, and about that time in most of the other cases. It was unfortunate that no further negotiations took place simply because the Commonwealth's offers to the plaintiffs were considered inadequate. The result was that there was nothing for it but for the claims to go to trial. At nil time had the Commonwealth been anxious to settle these matters quickly and fairly.²¹

SHOCK OF DEATH OF GIRL KILLS MOTHER

Sarah Cooper, 60, wife of Mr. W. Cooper, of Bulimba, Brisbane, died suddenly at Tweed Heads on Friday 30 June 1944. Mrs Cooper was the mother of Miss Phyllis Cooper, who died from burns and injuries received in the Moorooka tram-truck smash on September 6, 1943. Mrs. Cooper never recovered from the shock of her daughter's death.²²

The Trial

£2720 Warded in First Claim

On Wednesday 11 October 1944 was the start in the Supreme Court Brisbane, of the first of a series of claims against the Commonwealth arising out of a tram-truck smash at Moorooka on September 6, 1943



MR. JUSTICE E. A. DOUGLAS

All the claims were heard by Mr Justice E. A. Douglas and a jury.

Mr M. N. Julius (instructed by Mr Cyril J. Murphy) appeared for the plaintiffs, Mr A. D. McGill, KC, with Mr W. G. Mack (instructed by the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor) appeared for the Commonwealth.

Photo from The Telegraph Brisbane, Tuesday 17 Oct 1944 Page 3

The first claim was from a young woman who suffered burns and shock in the collision, Maureen Mary Patricia McCormack, 24, spinster, of Chinchilla, (formerly a munitions worker, of Amelia Street, Coorparoo).

The statement of claim set out that on September 6, 1943, Miss McCormack was a passenger in a tramcar travelling from Moorooka when a US military truck travelling in the opposite direction, collided with the tramcar, setting it on fire, and she suffered severe injuries.

Miss McCormack injuries were caused, the statement continued, by the negligent and unskilful driving of the truck by Private Hugh James Copeland, a member of the US forces.

Plaintiff's Injuries

Particulars of injuries to Miss McCormack were given as third degree burns to the face, ears, head, hands, arms, legs and feet, and shock and Miss McCormack was in the Mater Hospital from September 6 to November 21, 1943.

The claim further stated that the Miss McCormack had suffered acute pain and mental agony, her face was permanently disfigured, she was no longer able to close her right hand or lift anything heavy with either hand, her eyesight was weakened, and she suffered from insomnia.

She also had an acute fear of traffic and was no longer able to live and work in a city.

Particulars of the claim were: Loss of property £26, medical expenses £59, loss of wages (30 weeks at £4/10/), £220; total claim, £3,720.

The Commonwealth admitted liability for the negligence of the driver of the US military truck involved in the collision, and denied that damage to the extent claimed had been suffered. It brought into court £1,250, which it said was sufficient to satisfy the claim.

Opening the case to the jury, Mr Julius said that the only issue to be decided was the amount of damages.

In Court Miss McCormack gave evidence of the injuries received and she stated she had formerly been able to milk cows on her father's farm, but was now unable to do so,

Miss McCormack was then cross-examined on her evidence by Mr McGill. In accord with the jury's finding, his Honour gave judgment for the plaintiff Miss McCormack for £2,720, with costs to be taxed. ²³

£2000 for Woman in Smash

On Thursday 12 October 1944, a jury in the Supreme Court awarded Miss Ann Mary Tully, 33, of Annerley, £2000 damages for injuries she received with Mr. Justice E. A. Douglas entered judgment in favour of Miss Tully for that amount, with costs to be taxed.

The Commonwealth, in its defence, admitted liability for Copeland's negligence, and brought into court £750 as a sum sufficient to satisfy Miss Tully's Claim.

Particulars of injuries to Miss Tully were given as third degree burns to the face, head, and both hands, and shock, and was confined to hospital from September 6 until October 21, 1943. Miss Tully had undergone intense pain and her general health had been seriously impaired and would remain impaired for some time.

The claim further stated that Miss Tully had suffered permanently scarred to her face with blotched and disfigured and her eyesight had been affected. Also, movement of both her hands was permanently limited and she had been unable to work since the accident.

Mr. Max Julius (Instructed by Mr. Cyril J. Murphy) appeared for Miss Tully. ²⁴

£1,250 Awarded in Third Case Over Moorooka Smash

On Friday 13 October 1944, Gyneth Alice Boulter, 28, spinster, of Dornoch Terrace, South Brisbane, was awarded £1,250 by a Supreme Court jury in the third of a series of actions for the recovery of damages arising out of the tram-truck smash at Moorooka.

Miss Boulter had claimed £2,868/12/- damage, from the Commonwealth, before Mr Justice E. A. Douglas and a jury. Miss Boulter, who was a munitions worker at the time of the collision, stated that she received third degree burns to the face, head and hands, and shock when the tram, in which she was a passenger, caught fire.

The Commonwealth did not admit that Miss Boulter had suffered damages to the extent claimed, but paid into court £850, which it said was sufficient to satisfy the claim.

The statement of claim set out that Miss Boulter suffered acute pain and mental agony and that her eyeballs were reddened from burning, her eyesight was weakened and general health had deteriorated, intense pain shot through her body and head from time to time, she suffered from insomnia and had a fear of traffic. Her hands were reddened, and her face permanently disfigured. She had not been capable of doing any work from the time of the accident to the present.

²⁵

Mr. Max Julius (Instructed by Mr. Cyril J. Murphy) appeared for Miss Boulter.

Smash Victim Gets Verdict for £255

On Tuesday 17 October 1944, Margaret Mary Leonard, wife of Edward Victor Leonard, of Herbert Street, Annerley, was awarded £255 by a jury in the Supreme Court for injuries received. Mr Justice E. A. Douglas gave judgment for that amount, with costs to be taxed.

Mrs Leonard who gave evidence that she suffered contusions of the left arm, hand, and ankle and severe shock. Mrs Leonard claimed £411.19.9 damages including £61.19.9 special damages for loss of wages and medical expenses.

The Commonwealth admitted liability for the negligence of the driver of the truck involved in the collision, but denied that Mrs Leonard had suffered injury to the extent claimed.

Mrs Leonard said that she was unable to work for three weeks after the accident, that she still suffered from insomnia, and that her general health had deteriorated.

Mr. Max Julius (Instructed by Mr. Cyril J. Murphy) appeared for Mrs Leonard.

Further Claim

Also, on Tuesday in the Supreme Court, Miss Florence Eleana Watson, 34, formerly a munitions worker claimed £1,262/2/-, including £62/2/- special damages from the Commonwealth of Australia, for injuries.

Miss Watson was awarded £730 by a jury of four for injuries received. Mr Justice E. A. Douglas gave judgment for that amount, with costs to be taxed.

The Commonwealth paid into Court £250, which it said was sufficient to satisfy the claim. While it admitted liability for the negligence of the truck driver it denied that the Commonwealth had incurred damages to the extent claimed.

The statement of claim set out that Miss Watson suffered a laceration of the forehead and severe shock and that she had undergone pain. She also has a permanently scarred to her forehead, also her health would be impaired for a considerable time, and she suffered from asthma, insomnia, undue fatigue, lack of ability to concentrate, asthenia and vaso-motor disturbances.

Miss Watson said that since November 18, 1943, she had been working for a private clothing firm and earning £1/15/ a week less than she would have received as a munition worker. She had had to give up munition work after being injured.²⁶

Mr. Max Julius (Instructed by Mr. Cyril J. Murphy) appeared for Miss Watson.

£87 to Tram Fire Victim

On Wednesday 18 October 1944, A Supreme Court jury awarded Mrs. Anne Maria Dunne, munitions worker, of Melbourne Street, South Brisbane, £87 damages for injuries she received in the Moorooka Road smash on September 6, 1943.

Mr. Justice E. A. Douglas entered judgment in favour of Mrs. Dunne for £87, with costs. She had claimed £313/14/7 included £5/1/11 for loss of property, £4/16/ for loss of wages, and £3/16/8 medical expenses damages from the Commonwealth of Australia.

The Commonwealth brought into Court £50 as a sum sufficient to satisfy Mrs. Dunne's claim.

Mrs. Dunne's claim set out that she suffered severe nervous strain, which affected her general health. She was confined to bed for a week, and for more than two months used to wake at night screaming. She temporarily lost her ability to speak, except with stammering and she had to cease work in the day time because of crying fits.

Mr. Max Julius (instructed by Mr. Cyril J. Murphy) appeared for Mrs. Dunne.²⁷

£11,554 to Smash Victims

On Friday 27 October 1944, Mr. W. G Mack (for the Commonwealth) told Justice E. A. Douglas in the Supreme Court that nine cases of the claims for damages made by people injured in the tram smash had been settled. 'I express my pleasure,' said His Honour, 'that the parties have been able to settle these claims without further hearing in court'.

The Commonwealth had to distribute £11,554 among 15 victims of the Moorooka Road tram smash; their original claims had totalled £20,961

In six cases that went to trial damages awarded to the claimants totalled £7,042.

In the other nine cases that were settled out of court, the Commonwealth agreed to pay sums totalling £4,512 in damages to the claimants.

Below are the details of each cases that were settled out of court with the amount originally claimed in each case, the amount the Commonwealth paid into Court, and the judgment for the amount to be paid to each claimant by the Commonwealth:

Enid May Voss, munitions worker, of Greenslopes: Claimed £704 damages; the Commonwealth paid £175 into court; and judgment was for £250.

Violet Elizabeth Golton, munitions worker, of Spring Hill: Claimed £601; paid in, £250; judgment, £350.

Myrtle Elizabeth Beeston, munitions worker, of Windsor: Claimed £267; paid in, £50; judgment, £87.

Lorna Vivian Clunes, munitions worker, of Fairfield: Claimed £559; paid in, £250; judgment, £350.

Mavis Therese Kerr, munitions worker, of East Brisbane: Claimed, £365; paid in, £100; judgment, £160.

Joyce Thurlow, munitions worker, Red Hill: Claimed, £309; paid in, £80; judgment, £115.

Joan Mercy Hall, munitions worker, Coorparoo: Claimed, £593; paid in, £400; judgment, £550.

Zelpha Pearl Crawford, munitions worker, Highgate Hill: Claimed, £2661; paid in, £600; judgment, £850.

Jessie Ferguson, munitions worker, Merton Road, South Brisbane: Claimed, £2628; paid in, £600; Judgment, £1800. This claimant suffered a permanent disability of the hands.

Mr. Justice E. A. Douglas entered judgment by consent for the claimant in each case, with costs as agreed on

Mr. Mack said that the cases of *White v. the Commonwealth* and *Bryce v. the Commonwealth* would probably be settled soon. These cases were adjourned sine die.

Mr. Max Julius (Instructed by Mr. Cyril J. Murphy) appeared for the plaintiffs.
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Some other cases were settled out of court and there is no detail in any newspapers of these settlements.

Counsel Takes Exception -To Judge's Criticism of Commonwealth in Case

In the Supreme Court on the Monday 23 October 1944, exception was taken by Mr A. D. McGill, counsel for Commonwealth, to criticism by Mr Justice E. A. Douglas on Friday last of alleged delay by the Commonwealth in the medical examination of munitions workers injured in the Moorooka tram smash and alleged delay in giving them financial assistance until their claims were heard.

Mr McGill also objected to the judge's statement that in some cases the jury had been almost too fair to the Commonwealth in respect to the damages awarded.

His Honour: "I do not think I criticised the Jurors.

Mr McGill: "You said in some cases they had been too fair to the Commonwealth.

His Honour: "Almost too fair.

Mr McGill: "That is saying that the jury had given too little in some of the cases.

At the request of Mr McGill to express himself further in regard to other criticism. Justice Douglas repented that he still thought that the Commonwealth was slow in admitting liability. He still thought these women deserved special consideration from the time liability was apparent, and that at least, in some of the cases some assistance should have been given.

Mr McGill said that at a very early stage the attitude of the Commonwealth was an admission of liability and a desire to settle claims.

Certainly, the objection of the plaintiffs' solicitors to the medical examinations being made before the statements of claims had been delivered had also caused delay.

Justice Douglas stated he had no hostility towards the Commonwealth, but he desired to state publicly that it should be realised these women were in a dangerous calling and that it was extraordinary that they should not have received any financial assistance for 13 months, although they were employees of the Commonwealth.²⁹

Justice Douglas also stated that he was surprised to find that these munitions workers, with the grave risk they incurred were not insured against accident or under workers' compensation in going to and from work.

Mr. W. G. Mack, for the Commonwealth, informed His Honour that the Commonwealth Employees' Compensation Act has been amended this year to include compensation for going to and returning from work for claims from the amended dated.³⁰

The Conclusion

The harsh treatment these women were exposed to was incredible, it took over 13 months for these women to receive any compensation from the Commonwealth Government. With these women made to go through medical examinations even before any discussions and funding conversation occurred. Thinking that it was only nine months since the accident these examinations must have been terrifying for the women. And in the end, most of the women had to go to court to win any compensation.

Several of the women had to fight every inch in court and even being cross examined just to receive some concession was unjust. On top of this their employer the Commonwealth Government only offered about half of what the women were claiming and then whatever money the women won was also taxed by the Commonwealth Government.

This must have been a massive strain on all the women involved and their families with one of the deceased woman's mother dying of a broken heart only ten months after the incident.

Even His Honour Justice Douglas raised concerns of the treatment of these women and the length of time that they had to wait for any financial assistance.

This would not have occurred in today's climate but back then Australia was in the middle of a war and the attitude to women was totally different. These women were never honoured and were lost in history but they were the people that held the nation together during these dark times and gave their lives to the nation.

This was not the first death of war workers in Brisbane during the Second World War and was not the last one also.

This historical story was compiled by Glen and Gail Dyer over several hundred hours, all Copyright enquires to the Brisbane Tramway Museum Society.

End Notes:

All information was obtained out of the following newspapers through the Trove Web Site.

¹ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Tuesday 11 January 1944, page 2 - Driver's Heroic Efforts to Save Girls Trapped in Tram

² Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Tuesday 7 September 1943, page 1 - FIRE IN TRAM KILLS TWO

³ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Tuesday 7 September 1943, page 1 - FIRE IN TRAM KILLS TWO

⁴ Truth (Brisbane, Qld. : 1900 - 1954), Sunday 3 October 1943, page 7 - FOURTH DEATH

⁵ Truth (Brisbane, Qld. : 1900 - 1954), Sunday 24 October 1943, page 9 - FIFTH DEATH IN MOOROOKA SMASH

⁶ Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton, Qld. : 1878 - 1954), Friday 1 October 1943, page 4 - THIRD VICTIM OF COLLISION

⁷ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Wednesday 8 September 1943, page 3 SMASH VICTIMS - ONE STILL ON DANGER LIST.

⁸ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Wednesday 8 September 1943, page 3 SMASH VICTIMS - ONE STILL ON DANGER LIST - Compensation Move

⁹ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Wednesday 8 September 1943, page 4 - UNION MOVE ON TRAFFIC CONTROL FOLLOWS SMASH - EX:DIGGERS' VIEW

¹⁰ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Saturday 11 September 1943, page 3 - TIGHTER CONTROL ON ROAD TRAFFIC

¹¹ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Friday 10 September 1943, page 2 - 7 Hurt in Tram, Truck Smash

¹² Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Friday 10 September 1943, page 4 - 2 SMASH VICTIMS DANGEROUSLY ILL

¹³ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Friday 14 January 1944, page 3 - MOOROOKA SMASH FINDING - SIX YEARS SENTENCE

¹⁴ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Tuesday 11 January 1944, page 2 - Driver's Heroic Efforts To Save Girls Trapped in Tram

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- ¹⁵ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Wednesday 12 January 1944, page 2 - SAYS "TRUCK NARROWLY MISSED HITTING ANOTHER TRAM"
- ¹⁶ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Thursday 13 January 1944, page 2 - American Says Driver Imprisoned for 6 Years
- ¹⁷ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Friday 14 January 1944, page 3 - MOOROOKA SMASH FINDING - Driver Of Truck Was Negligent and CAUSE OF INFERNO.
- ¹⁸ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Saturday 15 January 1944, page 3
- ¹⁹ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Tuesday 18 January 1944, page 3 - 17 SMASH WRITS OUT
- ²⁰ Truth (Brisbane, Qld. : 1900 - 1954), Sunday 28 May 1944, page 13 - £27,321 IN CLAIMS AGAINST C'WEALTH GOVL
- ²¹ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Monday 23 October 1944, page 3 - Counsel Takes Exception -To Judge's Criticism of Commonwealth in Case - Anxious To Settle
- ²² Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Saturday 1 July 1944, page 3
- ²³ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Wednesday 11 October 1944, page 5 - £2720 AWARDED IN FIRST CLAIM ON C WEALTH OVER MOOROOKA TRAM SMASH
- ²⁴ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Friday 13 October 1944, page 3 - £2000 For Woman In Smash
- ²⁵ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Friday 13 October 1944, page 5 - £1,250 AWARDED IN THIRD CASE OVER MOOROOKA SMASH
- ²⁶ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Tuesday 17 October 1944, page 4 - Smash Victim Gets Verdict for £255
- ²⁷ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Thursday 19 October 1944, page 4 - £87 To Tram Fire Victim
- ²⁸ Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1933 - 1954), Saturday 28 October 1944, page 3 - £11,554 To Smash Victims
- ²⁹ Telegraph (Brisbane, Qld. : 1872 - 1947), Monday 23 October 1944, page 3 - Counsel Takes Exception -To Judge's Criticism of Commonwealth in Case
- ³⁰ Townsville Daily Bulletin (Qld. : 1907 - 1954), Monday 23 October 1944, page 3 - MOOROOKA ROAD SMASH VICTIMS
-