



OFFICE OF THE STATE CORONER

FINDINGS OF INVESTIGATION

CITATION: **Non-inquest findings into the death of Stanley John Brady**

TITLE OF COURT: Coroner's Court

JURISDICTION: Brisbane

DATE: 25 September 2015

FILE NO(s): 2015/2120

FINDINGS OF: Christine Clements, Brisbane Coroner

CATCHWORDS: CORONERS: Investigation, tree felling accident,

Stanley John Brady lived at Sovereign Drive Tamaree in Queensland. He died on 3 June 2015 in the Royal Brisbane Hospital at Herston in Queensland. He was 62 years of age at the time of his death.

He died due to blunt head injuries sustained in a workplace accident which occurred on 21 May 2015. His death was therefore reported to the coroner for investigation.

Both the Queensland Police and the Office of Industrial Relations (formerly Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland) provided investigation reports to the coroner.

Stanley Brady was a very experienced arborist. He had initially learned his skill from his father who used to work as a timber cutter. Stanley Brady operated a tree felling/arborist business in south-east Queensland. His business came within the definition of section 5 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* which defines a person conducting a business or undertaking. Part of his business involved paying property owners to access their property and selectively remove certain timbers at a pre-arranged monetary figure. Mr Brady supplied and used his own plant and would employ a worker to assist him as the need arose.

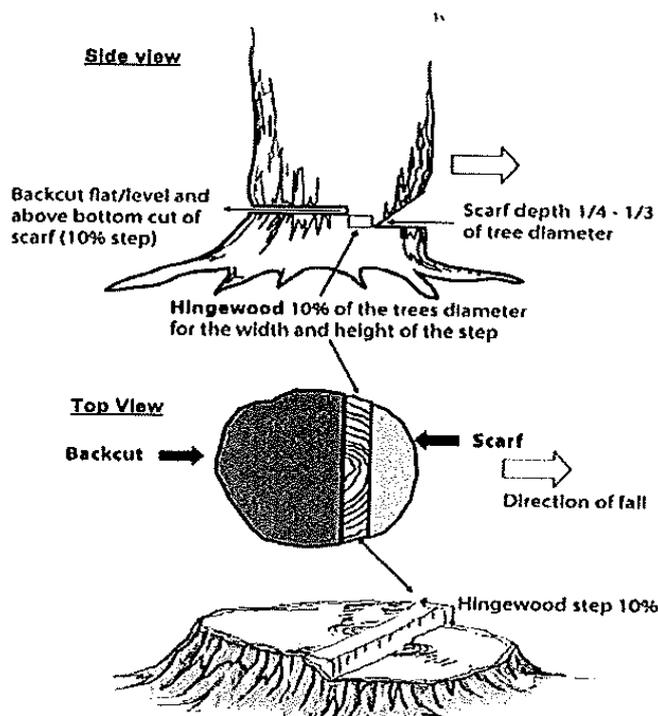
The incident in which Stanley Brady sustained fatal injury occurred on 21 May 2015 at about 7:45am. Stanley Brady was harvesting hardwood saw logs and pole timber from a 425 acre private property owned by Jeffery and Cecil Brown. The arrangement had been reached many years ago and Mr Brady had harvested in excess of 450 trees on the property at 375 Stewart Road Coondoo.

On 21 May Mr Brady had an employee with him, Gregory Engle. Mr Engle also had extensive history in the timber industry having worked for 25 years in timber mills and 10 years' experience felling over 2000 trees.

It was Mr Engle who was able to provide a statement detailing the incident which occurred.

Manual Felling

The report provided by the Office of Industrial Relations included a diagram depicting the recognized methodology of manual tree felling in the industry. Initially a 'scarf' is made on the side of the intended direction of fall of the tree. This is a wedge shaped cut into the tree to a distance of a quarter to a third of the tree diameter. A 'back cut' is then made horizontally on the opposite side of the tree and a height of no less than 10% of the tree diameter above the horizontal level of the scarf cut. This sequence of cuts creates a 'hingewood step' causing the tree to fall in the planned direction.



The Incident

Mr Brady and Mr Engle arrived at the property at about 7:45am and refuelled the required equipment including a John Deere skidder, a case dozer and chainsaws. They had selected the timber to be felled on a sloping hill with a 20 degree east facing downward slope. The tree which was to be felled was a 40m high, 600mm diameter Gympie messmate tree. The tree's crown was the heaviest with green leaf off its eastern side and leaned in that direction. There were two other trees in the foreground at approximately 15m and 45m respectively. Each of these trees had previously had their crowns stripped due to being struck by other trees that had been felled in the area.

Stanley Brady had identified a 2m tall 800mm stump that was 4m to the right and slightly uphill of the tree he was about to fell. The stump was identified as a safe refuge behind which he could position himself when the tree began to fall.

Gregory Engle confirmed Stanley Brady undertook the procedure in accordance with the standard practice. He used a petrol-powered chainsaw to make a scarf cut. He then made the back cut. As the tree commenced to fall, Stanley Brady moved to the side and positioned himself behind the stump. The tree fell forward as planned but made contact with the two trees that had already been identified in the foreground. The tree which was 15m forward snapped. The tree at 45m commenced to bend until the felled tree rolled off to one side, landing on the ground. This caused the bent over tree to whip backwards in the direction of the stump where Stanley Brady was sheltering.

Gregory Engle was standing some distance away observing and he called out 'Look out' to Stanley Brady. The tree then snapped and fell in the direction of the stump, striking the top of the stump. A portion pivoted downward and struck Stanley Brady in the head.

Mr Engle rushed forward and observed that Mr Brady had sustained serious head injury and was lapsing in and out of consciousness.

Emergency services were called and Stanley Brady was evacuated by helicopter to the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

Medical Treatment

Stanley Brady was admitted to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital on the day of the accident. He had suffered severe traumatic brain injury with bleeding and bruising. There were extensive facial and skull fractures. The injuries likely caused aspiration pneumonia and cardiac effects which were evident on echocardiogram recording. He had also sustained a fractured right scapula.

He was admitted to the intensive care unit but had sustained unsurvivable injuries. He was subsequently pronounced deceased on 3 June 2015.

Autopsy

Autopsy examination was conducted on 6 June 2015 by the forensic pathologist, Dr Samarasinghe.

CT imaging was performed and confirmed multiple skull fractures, previous three vessel coronary artery calcification, patchy pulmonary opacity consistent with oedema and/or aspiration pneumonia.

It was concluded by the pathologist that Stanley Brady died due to blunt head injuries

The investigation and review performed by the Office of Industrial Relations confirmed that Mr Brady had made the cuts and performed the felling manoeuvre in a manner which was consistent with the industry standard.

In Mr Engle's opinion he considered it was a freak accident.

Mr Brady had executed the preparation and felling of the tree in the appropriate manner. He had identified an escape path and refuge position which, in normal circumstances and in industry experience could have been expected to be appropriate.

The Office of Industrial Relations issued an incident alert on 10 June 2015. After further review of all of the circumstances they did not identify any issues indicating a broad workplace health and safety issue which required a further specific organizational response.

Stanley John Brady died tragically as a result of blunt head trauma sustained in a work related incident when he was felling a tree. He was very experienced and performing

the task in accordance with the appropriate industry best practice. Despite this, the tree fell in such a manner that other trees were impacted and one bent and then snapped before falling back towards Mr Brady's refuge point behind a stump angled back and to the side of the tree that had been felled. The incident occurred in an unpredictable and uncontrollable manner and could not have been prevented.

Christine Clements
Brisbane Coroner
Brisbane
25 September 2015