



OFFICE OF THE STATE CORONER

FINDINGS OF INQUEST

CITATION: **Inquest into the death of Paul Gerrard HOWE**

TITLE OF COURT: Coroner's Court

JURISDICTION: Maroochydore

FILE NO(s): COR 2750/07(4)

DELIVERED ON: 26 November 2008

DELIVERED AT: Maroochydore

HEARING DATE(s): 26 November 2008

FINDINGS OF: Mr IT Killeen, Coroner

CATCHWORDS: CORONERS: Inquest – Truck accident, steep descent, driver inexperience

Coroners findings and notice of completion of coronial investigation.

I have investigated the death of: **PAUL GERRARD HOWE**
of: **41 Village Way, Little Mountain, Caloundra,
Queensland**
a: **Male person**
whose date of birth was: **16 February 1966**
and was aged: **41 years** at the time of his death.

IFIND THAT:

About 8.50am on the 16 June 2007, Mr Howe was the sole occupant and the driver of a truck with a fully laden tipper that traveled down a steep descent on Jones Road, Buderim. Whilst descending the truck progressively increased speed and went out of control until the truck overturned on Jones Road near its intersection with Pittard's Road causing fatal injury to Mr Howe.

Mr Howe died on the **16 June 2007**.

Mr. Howe died on **Jones Road, Buderim, Queensland**.

I find the cause of death of Mr Howe to be as per the Autopsy Report, namely:

1[a] **Head and neck injuries**
due to: [b] **motor vehicle collision**

I am of the view that the following factors caused or contributed to this fatal incident:

1. Mr. Howe commenced employment with Ian Lardiner some hours before the fatal incident.
2. Mr Howe was not an experienced truck driver
3. Mr Howe was not familiar with the Ford Louisville truck and tipper.
4. The truck tipper was fully laden with a load of soil.

5. Mr Howe may have been unfamiliar with the steep descent of Jones Road.
6. Jones Road has a steep descent that requires drivers of heavy trucks to control the vehicles speed by the use of lower gears and brakes.
7. Mr Howe informed a co-employee shortly before the incident that "he was having a bit of trouble with the gear box but was confident he would have it sorted out by the end of the day".
8. After commencing his descent on Jones Road, Mr Howe was unable to engage the lower or other gears of the truck which cause the vehicle to increase speed.
9. Mr Howe subsequently applied the foot brakes of the truck which failed to slow the speeding truck.
10. There is conflicting evidence whether or not the brakes of the truck were in a defective condition at the time of the incident. When considering that the heavily laden truck was in neutral gear whilst traveling down the steep descent on the roadway, the brakes in either condition most probably would not have slowed or stopped the truck in the circumstances.

I authorize the investigating officer to dispose of any property obtained in connection with this investigation according to law.

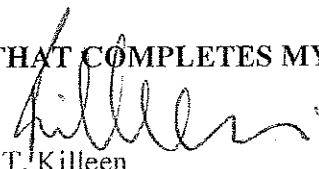
Comment:

Recommendation to Queensland Transport and Sunshine Coast Regional Council:

That clearly visible and prominent warning signs be erected on Jones Road prior to the first steep descent and also prior to the second and final descent on Jones Road informing motorists of:

1. the steep descent, including a percentage gradient,
2. that drivers reduce speed; and
3. inform drivers of heavy trucks to use low gears when descending Jones Road.

THAT COMPLETES MY FINDINGS. THE INQUEST IS CLOSED.


I.T. Killeen
Coroner
Maroochydore

26/11/2008