Truck hits tram — two dead

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PICTURE: JOHN LAMB

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Two passengers were killed when a crowded tram and a brewery truck collided at Clifton Hill last night.

More than 30 other passengers on the tram had miraculous escapes. Twelve are in hospital. Ten others suffered abrasions.

Early today the driver of the truck was charged on two counts of manslaughter, one of culpable driving and one of driving under the influence.

Police questioned him for four hours before laying the charges.

The truck, carrying about 70 empty beer kegs, crushed the tram's interior like matchwood.

Passengers were hurled from their seats. Some were thrown onto the road.

"It sounded like a bomb," said one man near the accident. "When I turned round everyone was screaming and yelling. It was dreadful."

The tram was on its way from the city and making a right-hand turn from Smith Street into Queens Parade, when the accident happened at 6.40 p.m.

The truck's trailer jack-knifed into the right-hand side of the tram, punching gaping holes in the body-work.

About 20 kegs catapulted into the tram compartment, crashing into passengers.

The names of the two dead men, aged about 30 and 50, have not been released.

The tram driver, Graham Berry, 31, of Rossmoyne Street, Thornbury, is among the injured.

Two of the 12 injured are in serious condition in St. Vincent's Hospital. Another six are in the same hospital in satisfactory condition.

Among them are Eileen Ross, of Fenwick Street, Clifton Hill, Thomas Goodwin, of Clinger Street, East Melbourne, Ivanica Bozie, of Oriel Road, Ivanhoe. All have shock.

Con Atnatziois, of Seymour Street, Preston, has a compound fracture of the right leg.

The other injured are in the Royal Melbourne Hospital, in a satisfactory condition.

Crunch

Mr. William Ogilvie, 59, of East Preston, said: "There was this great crunch.

"Glass shattered everywhere and barrels came crashing through.

"My leg was jammed between one of the tram seats and one of the barrels that came through the open side of the tram.

"I heard women screaming and people yelling. Then there were people running everywhere and ambulancemen trying to help."

Six ambulances were used to ferry the injured to the hospitals. One ambulance officer said the scene was chaotic.

"There were cries for help and people seemed to be scattered everywhere. Others were crawling from the wreckage," he said.

"I didn't think it was possible for a tram to be so badly damaged."

It took ambulancemen, policemen and firemen almost 25 minutes to free an elderly woman.

She was carried from the tram with blood streaming down her face and legs.

The shattered and splintered interior of the tram after last night's accident. At left, dislodged beer kegs have smashed into the passenger compartment.

A woman injured in the smash is helped from an ambulance after being taken to St. Vincent's Hospital.