

MELBOURNE & METROPOLITAN TRAMWAYS BOARD.  
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Memo. to Chief Manager.

An enquiry was held by me on Tuesday 17th and Friday 20th inst. in relation to the cause of the accident at Swanston and Lonsdale Streets intersection on Thursday 12th inst. when the Lonsdale Street Auxiliary Rope was cut.

Pilot Frederick Dainty was charged with breach of Signalmen's Rule No. 27, "Not to give signal till all safe", and Gripman Frederick F. Houston of North Carlton line was charged with breach of Rule No. 165, "Receive proper signals before crossing junction or intersection".

Mr. T. Barnes, Claims Superintendent, represented the Board and Mr. C. H. Turner, the Employees' Association on the first day and Messrs. T. Jewell and C. H. Turner on the second day.

At this intersection the pilot attends to two gear handles, one to set the points and the other for the auxiliary rope for the Carlton and North Carlton down trains to round the curve &c., besides watching the constable's signals so as to signal Carlton and North Carlton down trains and up Queensberry Street trains. The conductors of down Brighton Road and Toorak trains compare times with the conductors of down Esplanade and Prahran trains and they do not take signals from the pilot but obey the constable.

During the enquiry evidence was given by Pilots Dainty and Bowen, Gripman Houston, Conductor Marshall, Constable Stanley and a youth J. C. Bartlett.

Constable Stanley was on point duty when the accident occurred. This was his first time on duty there for more than two years; he had been on relief work at this intersection before but had never done a full day's work there at any time. The constable had no knowledge of the gear the pilot had to use, and he did not arrange any coordination or association of work with the pilot nor speak to him about it, but directed the traffic in his own way.

Immediately prior to the accident there was a down Brighton Road train at the stop mark in Swanston Street, north of Lonsdale Street, and a North Carlton down train at stop mark at south side of Lonsdale St

The road was made for East and West by the constable and the pilot set the points etc., for the North Carlton train to take the curve. This had just been done when the constable made the road for north and south (he had his back to the North Carlton train which he had not noticed). The conductor of the Brighton Road train asked the constable if all was clear, and receiving assent signalled his train to cross which it proceeded to do. The pilot saw the Brighton Road train on the move and attempted to stop the North Carlton train, shifted the points and made a signal to the gripman to throw the rope, which he misunderstood, with the result that the North Carlton dummy took the straight track and the auxiliary rope was cut. The consequences would have been much more serious if the North Carlton tram had taken the curve and collided with the Brighton Road train.

The cause of the accident appears to have been the lack of association in their work between the constable and the pilot, which the latter could not remedy, and the partial control only of the tram traffic by the pilot.

I consider that Pilot Dainty and Gripman Houston were not inattentive to their work and that the pilot did his best to remedy the mistake when he saw the St. Kilda train on the move, and I therefore exonerate both men from blame.

After the enquiry was concluded I saw Inspector Byers, who is in charge of constables on traffic duties in Melbourne, and pointed out to him the necessity of a closer understanding and co-operation between constables controlling traffic and <sup>our</sup> signalmen, and that there should be a method of signalling used by all constables alike, to be clearly understood by all signalmen and that the constables should know to a certain degree, the purposes of the mechanical devices used by signalmen, and they would recognise the difficulties and dangers attached to their misuse.

I offered to submit to him the views of our traffic department on the matter, which he promised to give consideration to, and I have since instructed the Acting Traffic Superintendent to formulate a method.

I have also asked the Acting Traffic Superintendent to go closely into the question of better control of our own traffic by ourselves at this intersection.

A good many years ago there used to be a signal box at the intersection with the necessary gear. It was afterwards removed and the hand-lifting gear, worked by conductors or pilots close to the track, was substituted.

Traffic of late years at this intersection has become very much more congested, so that there is now a constable in charge of traffic from 10 a.m. to 6.15 p.m.

On May 23rd last I wrote to the Police Department in reference to the risks run at this intersection on market mornings (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays) from somnolent market gardeners, and asked that a constable be placed on duty from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., which has been done irregularly since.

The pilot operating the two gear handles close to the track, and having to bend over to do so, is subject to great risks of accident which have become accentuated since the gear was installed.

I strongly recommend that the levers be worked from a signal box close to footpath as in bygone years, and if possible one lever be substituted for the two, and that a system of mechanical signalling as at Collins and Swanston Streets be considered.

*J. G. Robert*

Manager, Cable System

24th January 1922.

*Mr. Strickland*

*Will you let me know how this carries out this alteration?*  
*Yes* *Yes*

*Mr. Dix* as we shall later on be turning work in  
Lansdale it would be as well to arrange the gear so that  
it can be adapted to the final conditions: will you ensure the  
matter for this point please. Oct 26. 1922