

Matron tells Queensland inquiry:

RAIL CRASH DRIVER

SAID: I must have dozed"

BRISBANE, Tuesday: The matron of Wallumbilla Hospital today said that the driver of the Westlander express told her "he must have dozed" before the rail crash which killed five people last Saturday.

The matron, Alma May Reiken, told an open railway board of inquiry that she talked to the train crew after tending injured in the wreckage of the Western mail train.

She said a man introduced himself as "McDougall, the driver of the Westlander."

She alleged he told her, "It's all my fault. I was not well when I was at Yuleba (15 miles east of Wallumbilla) and should have got off the train there."

The inquiry opened at Roma and later adjourned to Wallumbilla, where board members inspected the scene of the crash.

"My mate's in there"

Matron Reiken said she was driven to the scene of the smash a few minutes after it happened.

"When I saw the dreadful mess, I said a quick prayer for the people so terribly injured and asked God to give me strength to carry on," she said.

she said. She told the board she ran from one to the other of the injured, giving injections to ease their suffering. One injured man named Courtney kept saying, "My mate's in there. My mate's in here."

Matron Reiken said she looked and saw a man terribly injured amid the wreckage.

She said she then looked around for the train crew and was told they were in the office.

She saw two men and was surprised at how slightly they were injured.

When the one who introduced himself as the driver

of the Westlander, told her he was not well and must have dozed, it was on the tip of her tongue, she said, to ask him why.

But just then, someone told her a woman and a child in the first carriage needed attention.

Up to that time, she said, there were three dead. Also a woman who was shockingly injured about the head, died just after the doctor arrived.

A man named Oehlman, was terribly crushed, she said, and was moaning frightfully.

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"Signal was against it"

David Bassingthwaite, grazier and stock and station agent, of Wallumbilla, told the inquiry he saw the Westlander approaching the station.

When it passed the points to the loop, it appeared to be travelling faster than he had ever seen it travelling before. There were no warning blasts on the whistle.

The signal was "straight out" against the Westlander, he said.

Miss Mona Mary Edmond, of the Federal Hotel, Wallumbilla, trained nurse, said she heard the noise of the crash and ran to the station.

She climbed in through windows of the Western mail and pulled seats and a luggage rack away to release some women from the debris.

Chairman overruled

She helped them through and on the platform she used sticks and boards to make splints.

She ripped up sheets to make bandages.

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When the inquiry opened Mr. R. B. Taylor, a Roma solicitor, sought permission to represent the driver of the Westlander, William George McDougall, 35, of Roma.

Mr. G. T. Foord the inquiry chairman, ruled this was not permissible.

Mr. T. H. Gould, board member representing the running men, protested against the ruling and demanded an adjournment while advice was sought from the Crown Law office in Brisbane.

Later, a telegram was received advising that Mr. Taylor was entitled to appear and cross-examine witnesses.

The inquiry was adjourned till tomorrow.