

Sleep argument countered

TRIAL SHOWN CCTV FOOTAGE FROM INSIDE TAXI JUST BEFORE FATAL CRASH DRIVER IS ACCUSED OF CAUSING

By Myles Peterson

The trial of a taxi driver accused of causing the deaths of three women and seriously injuring three others heard the prosecution's closing arguments yesterday afternoon at Shepparton County Court.

On June 20 last year Kialla man Jatinder Panesar, 38, is alleged to have driven dangerously through the intersection of Pyke Rd and Turnbull Rd, Ardmona, colliding with a minibus carrying the elderly passengers.

During the week-long trial, defence barrister John Dickinson QC called on expert witnesses to testify Mr Panesar suffered from sleep apnoea and was possibly asleep when the collision occurred and

therefore not voluntarily in control of the taxi he was driving.

In his summary, prosecutor Grant Hayward countered CCTV footage shot from inside the taxi showed no evidence Mr Panesar was asleep before the collision.

"He drove straight into the intersection... he didn't give way," Mr Hayward told the jury of 10 women and two men.

"The evidence in this trial shows he was awake. That evidence comes from two sources, the CCTV and Mr Panesar himself."

Mr Hayward played the CCTV footage to the court while narrating the events on the fateful day of the collision.

"Moments before the intersection



Accused: Jatinder Panesar arriving at Shepparton County Court.

it shows him looking to the right... only at the last second does he look to the left, but it is too late at this stage," he said.

The black and white footage

displayed at one frame a second showed the occupants of the taxi, Mr Panesar and two passengers, before and during the collision.

Mr Hayward said the driver had shown no sign of being asleep. "He accepted on the 20th of June 2017, he told (the police) the truth. He told them he did not feel sleepy as he drove that day," he said.

Previously in the trial, Mr Hayward outlined the deaths and injuries Mr Panesar allegedly caused after failing to stop at the give-way sign.

"As a result of that collision, three passengers were killed," Mr Hayward said.

Valerie McCubbin, 80, died at the scene and Doreen Emanuelli, 95, died three days later as a result of

injuries the collision caused.

Theresa Tyndall, 91, died four days later, also as a result of her injuries.

The prosecution said Laura Vagg, 73, suffered a spinal fracture, Evangelina Voutha, 78, suffered a fractured sternum and acute heart failure and Marion Gellatly, 85, suffered a fractured left cheekbone and fractured left eye socket.

During the trial, the defence focused on Mr Panesar's alleged undiagnosed sleep apnoea condition and disputed Ms Emanuelli had died as a result of the collision and the seriousness of Ms Gellatly's injuries.

Mr Dickinson is due to give his closing arguments for the defence this morning before the jury retires to consider a verdict.

Greater Shepparton kids shown the light

By Tara Whitseed

The work of the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project was on show at the Italian Social Club last week.

Event spokeswoman Fiona Smolenaars said 80 people came together to understand more about the Lighthouse Project's work and share stories of the powerful connections many of its volunteers had with Greater Shepparton children.

With the service boasting 447 volunteers, Ms Smolenaars said there was a range of areas in which they helped students.

"(They) are a mighty group of people doing what they can whether that's reading, mentoring, offering work experience and industry tours or providing financial support," she said.

"Their work helps to improve educational outcomes, develop strong social connections and build aspiration.

"It's all designed to change the trajectory for our young people."

Lighthouse is a community movement created to ensure the Greater Shepparton region offers all young people the chance to realise their full potential and thrive in their lives.

They continue to improve wellbeing and educational outcomes from conception to career.

Ms Smolenaars said the project's work was powerful.

"The Lighthouse team is committed to this work for the next 20 years — helping to connect, facilitate and link the great people of our community so our kids reach their full potential and thrive," Ms Smolenaars said.



Happy to help: The Lighthouse Project's Carla Miles with community partnership representatives Helen Cooney, from the Caroline Chisholm Society, and Cathy Turnbull, from the University of Melbourne.

See how libraries change their communities' lives

Goulburn Valley Libraries will launch "Libraries Change Lives" tomorrow as part of a statewide campaign that aims to highlight the value and impact of public libraries.

GV Libraries chief executive Kevin Preece said libraries provided more services than just lending books.

"Libraries provide a range of free, essential services that are not only highly valued by

delivered more than \$4 back in community benefits.

"As an example, we provide Storytime for pre-schoolers at every library. The development of pre-reading skills is critical in addressing low literacy rates. A child who starts school behind will usually stay behind throughout their school and adult life. In this way, libraries improve the chances of a person succeeding at school and getting a

JOIN US FOR OUR OPEN DAY!

THURS 1st NOV, 11am - 1pm

HOMES FROM \$95K