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Sister sues killer driver

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THE sister of two teenagers killed when a car hit a group of young party-goers in northwest Victoria is suing the driver for psychological injuries.

Shane and Abby Hirst were among six teenagers killed when Thomas Towle drove his car into them near Mildura on February 18, 2006.

Their older sister, Kylie Anne Hirst, said in her statement of claim she had suffered and would continue to suffer psychological injuries as a result of the collision, including post-traumatic stress disorder, panic disorder and major depressive disorder.

Ms Hirst said her psychological injuries had left her unable to earn an income.

Towle, formerly of Red Cliffs, was driving with his four-year-old son on his lap when he veered into the group of teenagers as they left a 16th birthday party. A Supreme Court jury found him guilty of six counts of dangerous driving causing death, and four of dangerous driving causing serious injury.

He was cleared on six counts of the more serious charge of culpable driving.

Towle **failed last month in a bid to appeal** against his 10-year jail term.

Ms Hirst alleges that Towle drove his car at an excessive speed, failed to exercise reasonable care and skill in his driving, that he failed to observe the presence of Shane, 16, and Abby, 17, beside the road and failed to pay attention to the prevailing road conditions.

A preliminary hearing was scheduled at the Victorian Supreme Court for lawyers representing Ms Hirst and Towle, but the parties did not attend.

Justice Stephen Kaye yesterday ordered both sides to conclude mediation by June 30 or return to court so the matter could be referred for a civil trial.

Also killed in the crash were **Stevie-Lee Weight**, 15, and Cassandra Manners, Cory Dowling and Josephine Calvi - all aged 16.

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