

Stevie-Lee father to sue Towle

By Allan Murphy

THE father of one of the six children killed in the 2006 Cardross car accident will pursue a damages claim against the driver of the car in the Mildura Supreme Court next month.

Stevie-Lee Weight, 15, was among the victims killed when a car driven by Thomas Graham Towle crashed into a group of teenagers near the corner of Myall Street and Boobook Avenue on the evening of February 18, 2006.

Stevie-Lee's father Stephen Weight has launched civil action against Towle which has been listed for the Supreme Court in Mildura in the week beginning August 25.

Towle, 36, of Red Cliffs, has appealed against a 10-year jail term handed down in the Supreme Court of Victoria on six charges of dangerous driving causing death and four counts of dangerous driving causing serious injury. The appeal is yet to be heard.

A directions hearing over the civil claim was yesterday briefly heard in the Supreme Court in Melbourne before Justice Stephen Kaye who directed the matter be heard by the Supreme Court in Mildura next month.

Yesterday's hearing was told the Mildura sitting could last two days.

Mr Weight has entered into proceedings to bring a common law claim

of entitlements to damages against Towle, despite attempts by the Traffic Accident Commission to negotiate a settlement.

A TAC spokeswoman said the commission had agreed to have the matter heard in Mildura late next month.

"The TAC continues to explore alternative means for dispute resolution," the spokeswoman said.

She said the TAC had previously made a "substantial offer" to Mr Weight which had been rejected by his legal representatives.

Also killed in the 2006 accident were brother and sister Shane, 16, and Abby Hirst, 17, Josephine Calvi, Cory Dowling and Cassandra Manners, all 16.

Renee Carter, 17, Bradley Prowse-Thompson, Nicholas Pezzaniti, both 16, and Marco Medici, 15, suffered serious injuries in the crash.

It is unsure how many, if any, of the civil claims resulting from the accident have been settled.

A five-and-a-half week trial in Melbourne in February and March this year was told Towle's four-year-old son was sitting on his lap when he veered into the group of youths.

A jury found him not guilty of six counts of culpable driving and four counts of negligently driving causing serious injury, but guilty of the lesser charges.

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