

Trucker's despair at a trail of destruction

By JUSTIN VALLEJO

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THIS is the dreadful instant when the driver of an uninsured and unroadworthy truck watched a car he had slammed into burst into flames, killing its driver.

David Lawler, who had just crashed into 35 cars caught in a traffic jam on the Mooney Mooney bridge on the F3 freeway, stood on a concrete barrier, hands on head, hysterically yelling, "F. . ., f. . ., f. . .".

In the distance a pall of black smoke rose from 52-year-old grandmother Ann Parker's car.

Stuck on the front of his 18-tonne prime mover was a Holden Rodeo, lodged in place after being taken along for the ride. It finally came to rest next to a jack-knifed utility.

Mrs Parker was killed and nine others were injured.

Chris Buckley, of Paterson, and Oliver Copins, both 20, of Raymond Terrace, told how they had stopped for the initial accident that had caused the jam on Friday night.

They tried to help Mr Lawler after his truck lurched to a halt.

"He just jumped out and was hysterical, in an absolute state," Mr Buckley said.

"We were trying to get him down and away from the truck because there was fuel leaking, but we couldn't reason with him.

"It was expletive, after expletive, after expletive – he was just swearing over and over again.

"He couldn't believe what had happened. I have never seen anyone in such a state before."

Mr Lawler remained tight-lipped yesterday after seeking legal advice, unable to say whether his shock was at the accident's horrific toll or the fact his Volvo F12 was unregistered, uninsured, and unroadworthy.

Family and fellow truckers have rallied to his defence, saying he has been "doing it tough" since the accident, which left hundreds of people wandering the bridge in shock.

"Some people laughed in disbelief, some cried, some calmly walked and carried their luggage, others checked out their cars," Mr Buckley said.

"It was bizarre. It looked pretty chaotic, like a bit of a warpath because there was just debris everywhere, cars facing different directions, one car rolled over and went airborne.

"It was all pretty casual at first, given it was such a serious situation. But the real emotions began to come out once people had digested what had happened."

Megan Bain, 33, of Wamberal, was inside the 25th car in the truck's path of destruction.

"I looked in the rear vision mirror and saw the truck speeding past in the slow lane just hitting cars, ricocheting into everybody else," she said.

"Words can't describe the sight of this massive truck coming straight at us. Within seconds I was hit myself because it all happened very quick.

"I remember yelling at him because I thought he had just got the s. . .s with the traffic."

