

## Saving Kids on Farm

A US study published today in the medical journal *Pediatrics*, highlights highly significant reductions in child hospital admissions and Emergency Department visits related to quad bikes. The study looked at the impact of “Seans Law” introduced in 2010 in the state of Massachusetts, which restricted the use of quads by children <14 years and put other steps in place for those aged 14-18 years.

“This study provides strong support for Australian efforts to minimise deaths and injuries to children” stated Dr Tony Lower from the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety. “We really need to question the safety of these products, including the inappropriately named youth and child-sized quads that can weigh up to 120kg.”

“We know that injuries sustained by quads are more severe in nature than those from motorcycles. This is due to the frequency of rollovers and the weight of the vehicles.”

“Farm kids are even more highly exposed with 75% of all child quad-related deaths in Australia occurring on-farm, with the majority of these being kids that reside on the property.”

“While virtually everyone agrees that kids should not be riding adult-sized quads, we also have several cases involving child-sized quads that have resulted in crush and asphyxiation deaths.”

With more than 4000 cases in the US study, the regulations resulted in the rate of admissions (suggesting serious injuries), falling by almost half (41%). Similarly, Emergency Department visits reduced by 33% in those aged 0-9 years, 50% in 10-13 year olds and 39% in 14-17 year olds. There was no significant change over the period in the 25-34 year olds that acted as a control group.

“Undoubtedly there is a role for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in regards to the safety of these products for children and also for the state governments in developing and enforcing more pro-active legislation” said Lower.

“While the quad manufacturers will resist any attempt to cut into their market share, these results clearly indicate that quads of any size are not suitable for children given their physical and mental maturity. Just like those working in the food industry and in the tobacco sector before that, manufacturers are keen to get kids hooked on their product early, make them brand loyal and develop a customer for life.”

As this study indicates, enhancing regulations can effectively reduce child injury and should be a priority for state governments. More immediately all parents and caregivers should ensure that children under 16 years don’t ride or be carried as passengers on quads of any size.

“Of course we want to develop in our kids a love of the land and all things agricultural, so put them on a two wheeler, make sure it’s the right size for them, that they have a helmet and other protective gear and are trained and supervised. Yes they may still have an incident, but the chances of serious injury or worse are far less.”



A wide range of materials that can assist those that work and live on farms to reduce the risks to themselves, farm workers, family members and visitors, is available from the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety web site <http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/aghealth/> or call (02) 6882 1486 for further information.

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Release Date: September 12, 2017

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