Long overdue action on quad bikes applauded

The Rural Doctors Association of Victoria (RDAV) and Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) have added their voice to those concerned about the dangers of quad bike riding.

"Since 2001, there have been over 150 deaths in Australia from quad bike accidents, with 23 deaths last year and 10 deaths so far this year" said Dr Malcolm Anderson, RDAV representative on the Victorian Farmers Federation's Farm Safety Committee.

"Almost 65% of these accidents occur on farms, and almost 50% are due to roll-over incidents where death is caused by asphyxiation. Other causes of death include head injury, and those due to other injuries sustained in the accident.

"Quad bike fatalities now outnumber tractor fatalities, with the oldest person to die being 94 and the youngest 11.

"There are over 220,000 quad bikes in Australia. These statistics of fatalities, replicated in other countries, have led to quad bikes being classified as 'imminently hazardous vehicles', and farmers are urged to consider buying alternative farm vehicles.

"Quad bikes were not designed for agricultural use but their defacto use in this sector classifies them as 'plant' and hence almost certainly subject to workplace safety legislation. They are inherently unstable, with a narrow track and a high centre of gravity. They have limited carrying capacity, and are not designed to carry passengers. These factors make them prone to rolling over, and either tipping off the rider or landing on top of them. With a vehicle weight of around 300kg, a rider has little chance of survival in the event of such an accident.

"Crush Protection Devices (CPDs) are available, but the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries has actively lobbied against the fitting of such devices, maintaining that the wearing of helmets and 'basic rider training' is all that is needed to ensure the safety of the rider in the event of an accident.

"Clearly these measures are not working, and one wonders how many more deaths it will take until the industry acknowledges that definitive action must be taken to address this very serious problem.

"It was pleasing to hear the recent announcement by the Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Bill Shorten MP, regarding the establishment of 'QuadWatch', a community-based network to bring together farmers, community groups, emergency services and local government to raise awareness and inform users of the safety aspects of the use of these machines, and to enable users to make informed decisions about their use.


"Minister Shorten's press statement on Friday, 13 July, marking Farm Safety week, was a clear message that he understands there is a problem with quad bikes, and we look forward to the Work Safe issues paper on the subject, due to be released this month.

"We also applaud the decision of the NSW Government to give $1million for research into Quad Bike safety. In the meantime there is a strong case for the fitting of CPDs, otherwise known as Roll-Over Protection (ROP), here and now.
“The advice to farmers is to consider the use of an alternative vehicle for farm work, but if it has to be a quad bike, it is vital to wear a helmet, fit a CPD or ROP, and do not allow children to ride them.”

Dr Malcolm Anderson is available for interviews.

Media contacts: Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890 (Monday to Wednesday)
Ineke Kuiper on 0408 669 638 (Thursday and Friday)