



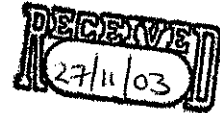
Centre for Advancement of Men's Health (CAMH)

collaboration of Men's Awareness Network (MAN) & Mannel.com.au

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Projects Manager/Men's Health Advocate



Rural & Regional Services
and Development Committee
Level 8, 35 Spring Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Attention: Ms Kristen Murray, Executive Officer

Submission: Parliamentary Inquiry – Injuries and Fatalities on Victorian Farms

Dear Ms Murray

Please find a Submission from Centre for Advancement of Men's Health (in partnership with the Mallee Track Health & Community Service) for the above inquiry.

I have also included a copy of "Kidsafe on the Farm" a educational resource for Primary & Secondary Schools Students "On the Farm".

The resource can be used in your library to support organizations to access information on farm safety education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to this important inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Bernard Denner



Inquiry into the cause of Fatality and Inquiry on Victorian Farms

Rural & Regional Services & Development Committee of Parliament

I am responding to the Inquiry in the capacity of my work in Men's Health & Farm Safety. As the founder and projects manager of the Centre for Advancement of Men's Health (CAMH) which since 1994 has focused on developing programs across rural Victoria (Australia and in Canada in 2001) that reduce the premature mortality and morbidity of males.

CAMH has developed educational information nights and programs for men, GP's and Health Professionals that provides **Skills** for males and health professionals to better deal with, recognise and reduce incidents around rural health and safety for males.

In regards to farm safety – CAMH recognised the high incidences of farm safety deaths and injury associated with older males and with children in their care.

CAMH developed along the lines of its successful Men's Health Information sessions, -Farm safety nights for adults. These nights and sessions attracted **very little** interest yet a Men's Health Night would attract hundreds of men and up to fifty per cent of the local male population.

Males did not perceive farm safety and accidents on the farm, as significant or as personal when compared to the early mortality rate from heart disease or prostate cancer.

In response to this lack of interest, CAMH developed in 1996 with Doctor Greg Stewart of Daylesford – "**KidSafe on the Farm**". This resource has since been reviewed for and on behalf of Mallee Track Health & Community Service (Ouyen) as a kit for use across the Mallee and other rural areas.

The introduction of primary school students **onto the farm** with a farmer provided an environment for a greater awareness of farm safety for young people. This education activity supported children to better understand the risks on a farm and filled an awareness gap created by males (fathers & grandfathers) not interested in learning new skills around farm safety or believed that 'farm safety' was an issue that impacted on their family, so new skills or information for the younger generation is not being passed on.

The work around KidSafe on the Farm is well researched through LaTrobe University Bendigo with research papers presented at the National Rural Health Conference 1997 and documented in a resource produced for rural practitioners. The program was also highlighted and a session filmed at Daylesford for the Channel 10 program 'Totally Wild'. Model programs based on the KidSafe on the Farm concept have developed across Victoria especially in the Mallee and been introduced successfully in the Laura District of South Australia and further around Australia. The program has also been made available in Canada as part of a Men's Health program I conducted across North Okanagan, British Columbia in 2001.

Inquire into, consider and report to Parliament on:

- 1. The main causes of fatality and injury on Victorian farms and other primary industries compared to other jurisdictions.**

Response:

Main causes of fatality and injury on Victorian farms is well documented, evidence based and researched through Monash University Accident Research Unit and Australian Centre for Agriculture Health & Safety (ACAH&S), Moree in New South Wales. The Kid Safe on the Farm Resource has also produced a range of research based on the Latrobe University Bendigo publication of data and research on our program conducted over 2 years in Central Victoria. (copy accompany response)

- 2. The matter and type of these injuries compared to other industries and jurisdictions.**

Response:

Work Cover and Monash University have clearly compared the type of injuries across a range of industries in several published reports and I am sure their submissions will highlight these facts and clearly demonstrate the factors of injuries for farm safety.

- 3. Current programs and initiatives designed to improve occupational health and safety on Victorian Farms.**

Response:

1. **Work Cover & Victorian Farmers Federation** programs and the ROP (Roll Over Protection) initiative... there is a range of programs. The use of inspectors from Work Cover to support farmers to recognise and develop better work place occupational health and safety measures is also very productive.

2. **Men's Health Information** sessions that target 'farm safety' as an issue along with a range of health impacts on males.

3. **Ouyen Farm Safety Expo** – a Mallee district initiative (based on the original Kid Safe on the Farm Program) that has been successfully targeting Primary School students and now Secondary school students over three years attracting over 1000 participants.

4. **Mallee Track Health & Community Service** in partnership with CAMH ... **KidSafe on the Farm Resource Kit**

5. A range of other Government initiatives around media and funded programs such as the one in Ballarat.

6. **Giddy Goanna** developed in Queensland

4. Any impediments to sustaining improvements in farm safety.

Response:

In my opinion the funds available for early intervention education awareness programs that target young people needs to be budgeted as a permanently funded opportunity. Victorian Department Health (DHS) needs to develop a protocol and policy for school farm safety program funding as part of rural education in partnership with the Education Department. It has also been very hard to secure funding for Men's Health Information sessions that can target farm safety directly to men when there are thousands attending sessions in rural Victoria annually.

Without Government Policy and clear government guidelines, departments responsible for providing funding opportunities cannot effectively budget ongoing for farm safety programs beyond current **one-off** funding grants.

There also needs to be for large companies some Taxation incentives to support community groups to engage in best practice farm safety education.

5. The financial and social cost of death and injury on Victorian Farms.

Response:

The financial cost of farm deaths and accidents is well documented through Work Cover & ACAH&S Reports and the research and work of Monash Accident Centre and also in Victoria, Farmsafe Victoria. General workplace death and accidents as are farming deaths and accidents have a great financial and human impact as well as a community cost for all involved.

The Social Impact of a farm accident and death is immeasurable. The premature death and the 'sense of loss' of anyone in any age group is immeasurable for

- ❖ Family
- ❖ Relatives
- ❖ Peers
- ❖ School community
- ❖ General community
- ❖ Work place colleagues
- ❖ Mates

and the sense of loss of future is very sad for everyone involved.

Those directly impacted by the death or major injury of a family member in the farm setting can better describe and articulate the great sense of loss especially for small rural communities and I am sure you will receive some submissions that will highlight the social impact of farm death and accident.

6. The need for further strategies to reduce the incidence of injury and fatality on Victorian farms, what form the strategy should take and whether they are best developed by government agencies, industry bodies, worker representatives or a combination of these. In particular the committee should consider the creation of further codes of practice or education and training programs.

Response:

Any program that impacts on issues around community life requires a sustainable collaborative approach from a range of agencies and community organizations. Governments need to provide the structure by which Budgets can fund collaborative strategies to deal with, farm safety instead of one-off funding grants.

The committee in line with any further industry recommendations that will support safer farm practices must consider the current Code of Practice and a means by which to police better practices.

There is a further issue that the Committee should consider and that is the issue of Legal Consequences for Responsibility of a **Farm Death or Injury** as is for **Work place Industry** incidents such as fines and jail terms to 'send a message' to the farm sector. It also must be considered that a farmer having a tractor accident outside the farm gate that results in the death or injury of a child or another adult could also result in legal consequences as far reaching as a charge of manslaughter. Should accidents and deaths on the farm be treated by the law in the same way to also make those responsible accountable. This is to the 'extreme' yet for motor vehicle accidents the issues of law applies vigorously as to make those in charge of vehicles more accountable and responsible. This must be a consideration of the committee when considering impacting a behaviour change to reduce death and accidents on the farm

In the area of education and training **Early Intervention** programs based around education and awareness are highly desirable as a means to provide people with a greater awareness of the issues, risks and the results of a lack of safety associated with farming. Workplace Health & Safety practices and legislation and the work of Work Cover and VFF can never be underestimated in the impact their programs and initiatives have had on reducing farm accident incidents. Educational session and programs are underrated, yet history demonstrates that **Education & Awareness** campaigns and sessions **Do Work** and can be demonstrated with campaigns for other health & social issues–

- ❖ Women's Health – Breast Cancer
- ❖ Men's Health Information sessions helped reduce early mortality
- ❖ Seat belt safety
- ❖ Anti Smoking... Quit campaign
- ❖ Safe sex
- ❖ Chemical use
- ❖ Litter from cars
- ❖ Recycling

and a range of other examples...

Education programs well researched and presented provide *new skills* based on awareness and knowledge reduce the impact whether it be reducing risk to premature death or changing behaviour to reduce impact on our environment. Farm safety is no

different from a range of other health & social issues that can be reduced by a greater degree of understanding and by providing a means to develop new skills to Avoid/Reduce/or Change behaviour.

Recently a report released in December 2002 by Australian Bureau of Statistics- Mortality Atlas of Australia indicates that Victoria has seen a significant *Decrease* in early mortality from heart disease for males and now has the lowest incident of early mortality for heart disease nationally based on the previous 1994 figures.

Victoria is the only state that has adopted the Men's Health Information and Early Intervention screening program as an intervention (another 'string in the bow' such as better ambulance response time) to help reduce through awareness and education for heart disease risk factors impacting on men's health especially in rural areas. Premature death from heart attack is higher for rural males (and women) because Emergency Medical Intervention is impacted by the 'tyranny of distance'. Men's Health Information sessions have clearly demonstrated to men (and working women) the value of attending early intervention risk assessment screening and information sessions, (the value of CPR, understanding 'Family History' and other 'interventions) that can support them in learning about and understanding their health risks to reduce their exposure.

This same 'learning about' philosophy and process was introduced into farm safety for primary school students in response to the death and accident incidences on farms and the lack of males accessing farm safety information.

KidSafe on the Farm wanted to provide students with the tools and information to change behaviour or to be able to recognise a 'risk' and communicate that to mainly the older male family member on the family farm or when they visited a farm.

Policy that provides structure for DHS in partnership with Dept. Education to fund farm safety education ongoing is needed to structure funding of organizations willing to provide farm safety sessions that support young people to protect themselves against unsafe farm practices usually conducted by older male family members, is needed. These departments already work in partnership to address other adolescent health and social issues such as the successful Secondary School Nurse program. Such collaboration to provide infrastructure and programs to reduce farm safety risk is also possible.

It has been extremely difficult to secure funding to incorporate farm safety education in to Men's Health Information Sessions. These sessions attract hundreds of men to sessions in rural areas and the MAN Model of Health has a respected reputation in the area of health information for males.

Farm safety is not seen as important as motor vehicle road trauma or work place incidences because the actual numbers are 'low' but the real facts are that most farm accidents and death 'happens' in your family space which has a significantly higher impact on the family unit especially when another family member is involved.

Some older males believe that their behaviour and history around the farm... 'we're OK mate', but unfortunately children can be at risk from this male attitude. If men don't attend Farm Safety Education sessions we need to provide the opportunity for children so as to

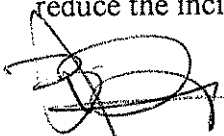
protect them and educate them to unacceptable farm practices. This will support future behavioural changes around farm safety.

KidSafe on the Farm provides this opportunity on the farm with a real farmer and provides a proactive way for primary and secondary school students to learn better farm safety practices and ways in which to communicate these lessons learnt to their fathers, grandfathers and older males.

The Government and associated agencies could support the educational and awareness program, KidSafe on the Farm model for communities. Providing the funds for the KidSafe on the Farm do-it-yourself kit, which has the tools and resources (Hardcopy & CD Rom) for community capacity building amongst agencies and community based organizations such as has been demonstrated in the Mallee, to offer this valuable opportunity to school students, not only in rural areas but also on the urban fringes where 'hobby farms' are also vulnerable for children and adults.

Conclusion...

Farm safety education is a government and community responsibility that needs the appropriate government policy structure for sustainable funding to develop education programs and for ongoing industry and community support for sustainable change to reduce the incident of farm safety deaths and accidents.



Signed by Bernard Denner
for and on behalf of Centre For Advancement of Men's Health
and Mallee Track Health & Community Service

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Attachments: KidSafe on the Farm Resource