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**Parliamentary Inquiry into Fatalities and Injuries on Victorian Farms**  
**Submission presented by Geoff Kendall: Eastern Mallee VFF 23/3/04**

The reasons why farm accidents and deaths are occurring at an increasing rate are because of the present economics of farming.

\*Farmers have to work harder and longer than they ever did before; for less return. They cannot afford the on farm labour they badly need so many wives are helping out when they can.

\*Many of the wives have taken on full or part-time employment to help reign in the diminishing farm returns then come home and do all the extra piles of bookwork related to the G.S.T.

\*Due to the present economics of farming many repair jobs are being left undone, machinery is becoming old and fatigued along with the farmers. This is why we are having more accidents.

\*Short cuts are being taken to get through the bulk of the work at a faster rate and something has to eventually give.

\*Poor monetary returns for a lot more hours worked at a higher speed coupled with the non-affordability of labour and general fatigue of the farmer and his equipment is causing this major problem.

You may be seeing an escalation in our region after 8 years of dry and drought conditions being noted as the worst affected area in the State of Victoria.

I know that we are the only employment sector that lives in its workplace; but it seems the accidents are mainly occurring during work and when something happens, the community really feel it extremely hard.

The little ripper program has been a good program for the children involved, maybe a few more adults need to be involved with the kids.

In the grains industry we are seeing the same gross returns as 40 years ago but expenses have gone through the roof doubling now on average every 4-5 years.

A one and half day Strategic Plan for the Australian Grains Industry to be released during Grains Week in Perth at the end of this month show a decrease in growers from 40000 to 29000 by 2020 and if government and marketing are not smart during these next few years we could hit critical mass of 12000 by 2020.

These findings are only going to escalate the present problems as we go harder and faster to try to survive as margins decrease by half every 4-5 years.

I do not believe extra legislation and more paperwork is the way to go. In fact this causes more jobs for the farmer to do and gives them even less time to be outside actually running the farm. This added stress and pressure is helping no one except for the people in the departments who retain their jobs shuffling or recycling our paper. This major problem is quite complex and there is not a simple solution.

**Paper work will not solve the problem.**