RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into cause of fatality and injury on Victorian farms

Modewarre – 9 March 2004

Members

Mr M. P. Crutchfield  Mr R. G. Mitchell
Mr B. P. Hardman  Dr D. V. Napthine
Mr C. Ingram  Mr P. L. Walsh
Mr J. M. McQuilten

Chair: Mr B. P. Hardman
Deputy Chair: Mr C. Ingram

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Murray
Research Officer: Dr V. Koops

Witness

Mr G. J. Dodson, Farmer (sworn).
The CHAIR — Would you state your full name and address for the transcript?

Mr DODSON — Gordon James Dodson, from Drysdale, on the Bellarine Peninsula. I run a couple of thousand sheep and I frequently use a four-wheeler to catch them. I am afraid that I have to totally disagree with the previous speaker. I guess in the last 12 years I have probably done 60 000 kilometres on the same make of bike. It is inherently safe. It is just as safe as my ute.

The fellow with the helmets — I have no more need to use a helmet on the four-wheeler than I have if I am driving my ute or my car. My four-wheeler sits down like a brick. I drive it mostly around the paddocks, I suppose at 35 kilometres an hour, which is just a comfortable sort of speed. The thing stops, it turns — and I do not have a death wish. People who come to grief simply have a death wish. It is that simple: it is operator error.

I have nothing much to add to that. I give my bike a bit of curry. I am younger on the inside than I look on the outside, so I do make the thing work. I have had a couple of minor incidents — my fault, that simple. It was not anything dramatic. As for tractors and whatever, we have had a couple of people on the peninsula killed — operator error, that simple. You cannot protect people from themselves; if they want to hurt themselves they will jolly well find a way.

My son works at a mill in Geelong. One lad got hurt. For some reason he made himself a platform and reached way up above a machine that he had no business to be near. He hurt his fingers. Why he did it nobody will ever know. It was not fatal or anything, but how do you protect people from themselves?

Mr INGRAM — Would you describe your property as flat, undulating or steep?

Mr DODSON — Undulating, but I have dam banks and whatever. If I am catching a sheep she will try to get in the water to get away from me, and that sort of nonsense. You have to put the brain in gear. I do not like pain. That is it.

The CHAIR — Thanks very much.

Witness withdrew.