RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into cause of fatality and injury on Victorian farms

Seymour — 14 April 2004

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Witness

Cr D. Paterson, Shire of Mitchell.
Cr PATERSON — I will make a couple of comments. I have been a farmer for the past 40 years — virtually all my life. It frightens me that the rules you wake up to sometimes. They are out there and they have come in without any practical knowledge of them. I think this is the frightening part, and as farmers we seem to hear this all the time. This 2-metre high regulation is a classic one. It is fine in the majority of cases, but yesterday my wife had to cover for me while I was at the shire council. Truck drivers cannot believe that you suddenly have to have a harness to get up a truck as they have been doing all their lives. The silos are the same. We go up the silo probably once a year, to open the thing, put the grain in and then it comes out the bottom. Now you are going to have to have a harness to get up there. That is not commonsense.

That is the word that is lacking in some of the decisions that are made. How the hell are you going to police them? That is the thing. You see all the WorkCover people who turn up after the accident, but if you cannot police something, to my mind you should not bring it in. Everything you do seems to come back to someone setting a criteria that everybody has to fit inside, and farming just does not fit in there. It is a unique part of the world and it has to have different rules to someone in the middle of Melbourne on a work site or whatever. That is what you have got to keep in mind. More red tape is not the answer to solve farm safety issues. It is commonsense and, as we have heard, education. If you keep going down that track I am sure you will do more good than bringing in more rule. Basically that probably covers all I need to say.

Witness withdrew.