



Surgeons call for action on child quad bike deaths

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The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is calling on the Queensland Government to act swiftly on the recommendations handed down by a coronial inquest into quad bike deaths.

The inquest examined the deaths of nine Queenslanders aged from nine to 86 between March 2012 and January 2014 with the aim of making safety recommendations that would help prevent quad bike-related deaths. Three of the deaths were children.

Queensland head of the RACS Trauma Committee Richard Lewandowski says major trauma injuries from quad bikes have also been on the rise across Australia, from 26 in 2010 to 51 in 2012.

“Of the 111 major injuries that occurred from 2010-2012, more than a quarter of the riders were less than 25 years of age,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“In the space of a fortnight in June last year, six people were flown to hospital in southern Queensland following quad bike crashes. For each quad bike fatality, there are an additional 40 hospital admissions and 40 emergency department presentations.

“Quad bikes are inherently unstable and leave very little room for rider error. Children, who are often more inexperienced and careless than older riders, can end up dead or disabled as a result.

“This is a devastating outcome for lack of judgement, lack of knowledge, lack of skill, or even lack of body mass and physical strength, all of which are more common in younger riders.”

Research shows that most injuries and deaths involve the bike rolling onto the rider and can occur at low speeds.

Dr Lewandowski believes that design approaches to improve the safety of quad bikes in terms of stability and protection in the event of a rollover should be prioritised.

“We urge the Government to consider all available strategies to prohibit children under the age of 16 from riding adult quad bikes,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“We also recommend the Government implement an Australasian New Quad Bike Assessment Program, identical in essence to the ANCAP safety rating, which would allow customers to choose the safest machines available.

“The improvements to vehicle safety delivered by the ANCAP star rating system are undeniable, and a rating system adapted for quad bikes would deliver similar improvements, save lives, and reduce injury.”

About RACS

Media inquiries: Amy Kimber, RACS Policy & Communications Officer
0437 144 050 or (02) 8298 4511

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RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

www.surgeons.org

Media inquiries: **Amy Kimber, RACS Policy & Communications Officer**
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