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Submission Review Team,

**Writer's background in relation to subject:**

My wife and I have operated a beef cattle property east of Glen Innes on the edge of the tableland's escarpment for 48 years. In recent years, we have employed one to two farm workers plus casuals. The topography graduates from relatively flat to undulating and steep land with some heavily timbered areas.

We have a number of quad bikes in various levels of service activity plus there are two side by side vehicles and one two-wheel bike. Personally, I would travel 5,000 to 7,000 kilometres a year on farm quads. Working dogs are not used due to the constant Wild Dog baiting program required to prevent heavy stock losses.

**Safety procedures:**

- A considerable effort is applied to removing hazards including rocks, stumps and deep holes
- An extensive network of tracks has been established to ensure distance travelling on quad bikes has reduced hazards. Where tracks traverse slopes, side cuts are made
- Quad bikes are regularly serviced, and we have the capacity to take a quad out of service and use another whilst waiting on parts and repairs.
- We have taken the decision to upgrade from fixed rear suspension models to independent rear suspension for better stability / safety and rider comfort
- New riders are regularly briefed on safety matters and potential hazards with the briefing supported by actual on ground demonstrations (as is the case for all farm equipment).

**Submission:**

**Roll bars;**

In our situation, and I believe many others, roll bars would add a very significant hazard to rider safety. In timbered and lightly timbered country, it is often necessary on many times a day to "duck under" low tree limbs and a roll bar would guarantee an accident which may be quite serious.

## **Helmets;**

In my experience, full face helmets provide an additional risk factor in that ground depressions and deep holes are harder to adequately distinguish. Having had fairly extensive surgery for melanoma removal, I require adequate sun protection including a broad brimmed hat. Frequently, we muster cattle at a distant location and then proceed with the necessary cattle work. Whilst I haven't tried one of the new helmets at this stage, I can't be sure of its usefulness.

## **Preventing young people from riding quad bikes;**

I firmly believe that it is better to introduce young people to quad bikes early (with constant adult supervision) before they reach an age where they know everything. Leaving young people (regardless of being under 16 or older) to ride in groups unsupervised increases all of the risk factors.

## **Incentives to move to "safer equipment";**

Whilst a fall from a two-wheel bike may not have the same high-level consequences, it is likely that the falls will be much more frequent.

Side by side vehicles have many farm applications, however they don't provide a viable alternative to quad bikes in many farm operations. The short wheel-base units do have an application in good terrain where working dogs are part of the farm operation. The operational constraints in our case (and I believe many others) are;

- The greater difficulty in seeing obstacles in front of the right front wheel verses quad bikes
- As these units are generally equipped with a windscreen, the occasions when vision is compromised due to rain, dust and sunlight (on slightly dusted windscreen)
- The lack of agility required to effectively and safely handle cattle verses the quad bike
- The serious accident potential of a roll over to the left must be considered. Whilst there are seat belts, they don't cover all events and many people will not wear them due to the high frequency of getting in and out of the vehicle.

## **Quad bike safety features;**

- Small quad bikes generally have a narrower wheel spacing and therefore are more likely to overturn sideways than full sized bikes. Whilst it is accepted that a young person has a greater risk of injury on a large bike that rolls, a small bike can potentially roll more often. The independent suspension on larger bike does increase the safety of the machine.
- The assessment of the various quad bikes sold in Australia for key safety performance features would be a reasonable action.

## **Rider training;**

Rider safety training for young people and first-time riders would potential reduce the accident rate. It is important that training involve modules suited to the specific workplace.

Should any of the above comments require clarify clarification, I am happy to do so.

David Donnelly