

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian

Keeping Country Kids Safe initiative

Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies
General Meeting
Meeting Room 1, Industrial Pavilion
RNA Showgrounds
9:30am – 12pm

Slide 1: introductory slide

Acknowledgement of Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies officials. Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Commission's Keeping Country Kids Safe initiative.

Your support and engagement with fostering interest in our work and this initiative is very important to us.

We strongly believe that such support will be invaluable in reaching key target groups critical to its success..

I apologise if the topic I am about to speak to has personal significance for anyone in the room today.

I hope that you take comfort from hearing from the objectives of our initiative.

Slide 2 Commission - background

Just to give you a bit of background about the mission of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

We are mandated as an independent agency to protect and promote the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people - Queenslanders under the age of 18.

Since 2004, the Commission has had responsibility for collecting and analysing information on the deaths of children in Queensland and recommending ways of reducing preventable deaths in the future.

We now have a substantial body of data which tragically indicates children in country areas are 2.4 times more likely to die from accidental injuries than city children.

To assist the community better understand how to prevent these deaths, we gather and analyse information about the circumstances of these accidents, and examine the risk factors which may have contributed.

This is assisting us obtain a more robust evidence base about trends and issues – beyond individual engagement with particular events or incidents.

I am very concerned about what aspects of this information are telling us about safety issues for all children in Queensland.

Reviewing the information about children in rural areas has strengthened my commitment to working with the rural sector to identify ways to prevent child deaths.

Slide 3: Keeping Country Kids Safe Objective

Earlier this year I launched the Keeping Country Kids Safe initiative.

It aims to develop a comprehensive injury prevention strategy tailored to the needs of rural communities.

If we are to seriously achieve meaningful change, all parties with an interest in the health and wellbeing of rural communities need to join forces and build on the knowledge and strengths within the sector.

The Keeping Country Kids Safe project is deliberately taking a consultative approach to injury prevention.

I'm here today to invite and encourage you as leaders in the rural sector to get involved in the initiative.

I would like to share with you a little of what we know from looking at five years of data on child deaths.

Slide 4: Key findings include:

- 253 country children died in accidents between 2004 and 2008
- Further analysis shows country children were 2.4 times more

likely to die from accidents than city children

- Transport accidents were the leading cause of injury death in country areas, accounting for 165 deaths
- Drowning accounted for 43 deaths
- 32 deaths were the result of fire or other non-intentional injuries
- And of the 253 injury-related deaths, 44 occurred on farms.

Slide 5: Observations of risk factors

The Commission's role in maintaining the Queensland Register of Child Deaths places us in a unique position to analyse the circumstances around these fatal injuries, and consider the risk factors that may have contributed.

Our analysis highlights:

- The unique combination of home and workplace on family farms presents risks to children that don't exist in residential or city areas.
- Risks include dams and troughs, motorcycles and ATVs, tractors and other machinery.
- Patterns identified in motorcycle and ATV accidents included children riding bikes that were too large for their size and strength, and riding without safety equipment, including helmets.
- A key risk factor for drowning is parental supervision, particularly for children under the age of five.

More than half the toddlers who drowned were left unsupervised for long periods of time, particularly given their age and perception of danger. Young children are naturally curious and don't appreciate potential risks.

- A concerning trend was children riding with their parents on machinery not designed to carry passengers, such as tractors, forklifts and ATVs

- The majority of children fatally injured on farms were injured on their own property, or on properties in their local area.

They weren't visitors from non-rural areas, who may not have been aware of the risks.

Slide 6: Building a Positive Safety culture

From these observations and our research it's clear there are a number of social and cultural factors which can contribute to a higher rate of injury to children in rural areas.

Our objective through the Keeping Country Kids Safe initiative is to promote discussion and to assist identify practical opportunities and actions which can assist parents strike a balance between minimising risks, and keeping the things that make country life fun for children.

Our aim is to change the attitude that these fatalities are 'tragic accidents', and promote an understanding that they are preventable.

I'm committed to building this understanding and engagement and promoting a 'bottom-up' approach to injury prevention, which is why we're consulting widely.

Our role in keeping country kids safe is not to place further regulation on rural communities, but to help communities define the problem and create their own solutions.

Slide 7: Rural Sector consultation

I hope you will review the Keeping Country Kids Safe Discussion Paper available here today and help us to gather the views of people heavily involved with rural communities, rural industry or other community-based organisations.

We are keen to obtain information on your experiences in rural communities and how **you** think we can make a real and practical difference.

For this approach to be successful, those from rural communities need to get involved.

The Survey is seeking the views of people on a range of issues, from the state of country roads to supervision of young children and workplace health and safety.

We have already provided 30,000 copies to families throughout Queensland through the Farm Fest Rural Mail, and are still seeking other opportunities to reach families.

Once the response are collected we will combine the evidence from research, industry, government and non-government organisations with the ideas and realities of rural communities – which we hope to gather through this survey.

I hope you can and will assist us build a community-driven strategy to reduce preventable deaths and injuries to children in the country.

Slide 8: Contact us

If anyone here today thinks they can help us distribute the Survey in their local area, please contact our lead project officer, Josie Thomas, on the contact details provided.

Alternatively, our staff will be available at Keeping Country Kids Safe stand at the Agforce MEATing Centre during the rest of the EKKA.

Thanks for the opportunity to discuss this initiative.

I look forward to hearing your input about how we can better build safer environments for country children in the future.