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Rollover protection devices must be made compulsory to stop quad bike fatalities, say unions

Mandatory crush protection devices must be installed on all new quad bikes in Australia to prevent any more fatalities from rollovers, say unions.

Ahead of a national forum on quad bike safety later this week, the ACTU is calling for roll over protection devices to be compulsory for all new quad bikes sold in Australia.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick said the death of a 58-year-old man in a quad bike incident at Murchison in northern Victoria on Sunday highlighted just how dangerous they are.

The man is the 160th quad bike fatality since 2001, and the tenth in Australia this year.

Mr Borowick said the manner of the man's death, which was caused when the quad bike flipped over and trapped him underneath, was all too common and was preventable, Mr Borowick said.

"There are about 220,000 quad bikes in use in Australia, and they are the single biggest cause of workplace fatalities on farms," Mr Borowick said.

"Quad bikes have grown in usage as work vehicle, particularly in the agricultural sector, but they are killers.

"Last year a record 23 deaths were recorded, and 18 of those deaths were on farms. Tragically, 10 people have already lost their lives this year.

"Half of these fatalities were from roll-overs when the victim was crushed or trapped by their quad bike landing on top of them, or pinned underneath a quad in water and drowned. There are also hundreds of serious injuries each year.

"Quad bikes have inherent problems with stability, with some evidence indicating that they may roll over even on apparently flat terrain."

The rate of fatalities could be dramatically reduced through the simple installation of a crush protection device – such as a u-shaped or T-bar shaped metal bar – which would reduce the risk of being crushed, with only minimal additional cost. Similar roll-over protection devices that have been compulsory for tractors since 1992 have reduced fatalities by 80%, Mr Borowick said.

"We don't want to see quad bikes banned, but they must be made safer," Mr Borowick said.

"We cannot wait for more people to die while more research is conducted into the effectiveness of crush protection devices. There is enough evidence now to show there is a cheap and effective solution that would save lives.

"Crush protection devices are available already but are not mandatory. We need to ask ourselves how much is a life worth, as opposed to the small extra cost of a crush protection device."

Unions will raise the proposal for mandatory safety devices at a national forum chaired by Workplace Relations Minister Bill Shorten in Melbourne on Friday.

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