

# TACC Submission Quad Bike Safety in Tasmania



# TACC Submission for Quad Bike Safety in Tasmania

## About TACC

The Tasmanian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (TACC) is a division of VACC representing over 400 members in the retail automotive industry in Tasmania. The retail auto industry is a significant employer of Tasmanians and supplies vital sales, service and repair services to the community.

The categories of membership of TACC includes new and used car and motorcycle dealers, independent garage owners, smash repairers, towing operators, truck and trailer repairers, service station and convenience store operators, farm machinery dealers and many more.

TACC is also heavily involved in training of automotive apprentices through the TACC Group Apprentice Scheme, where the Chamber directly employs over 70 apprentices across a range of automotive trade qualifications.

TACC has formulated responses to the questions posed in the Tasmanian Department of Justice Quad Bike Safety Taskforce Issues Paper (DOC/17/1163).

The Motor Trade Association of Australia (MTAA) is the federation body consisting of VACC and the state and territory Motor Trade Associations

**Questions: What do you believe are the best ways to communicate to quad bike users about risks and safe use practices? What do you think are the key safety messages for quad bike users? In your experience, what are the most prevalent risk factors associated with the use of quad bikes?**

Irresponsible use of quad bikes coupled with the inappropriate use of quad bikes on steep terrain with heavy loads, are among the most prevalent risk factors.

Responsible use of quad bikes, following manufacturer's recommendations should be the key safety message for users.

Communication regarding practices related to quad bikes should be via authorised motorcycle retailers, the farmers' federation, schools and WorkSafe Tasmania. In turn, these organisations and businesses can use their social media platforms to ensure that any communication reaches the intended audience.

**Questions: Have you utilised training in relation to quad bikes? If so, what was your experience? Is appropriate training readily available in the State? If not, how is it lacking? Do you think training should be mandated (legally required) in some way? What do you think are the barriers to greater numbers of riders using training courses? How could these be addressed?**

A quad bike on a farm is classified as 'plant,' and as such, workers who operate plant should be equipped with adequate information and training to undertake activities involving the product.

Quad bike training is not commercially viable for training providers as there is little take-up from the agricultural community, as most quad bike riders are self-taught. However, it is the view of TACC that individuals using quad bikes in a workplace setting should undertake compulsory training and testing, with a licence issued upon successful completion, much like obtaining a licence to perform high-risk work already in place through WorkSafe Tasmania.

The delineation of use of quad bikes on farms needs to be clearly identified, which has been an impediment to understanding the contributing factors for quad bike accidents. The quad bike occupies an unusual status within the term of 'plant' on farms. It is the only piece of plant that has perceived simplicity, versatility and economy of use, coupled with a desirability to be ridden by all individuals for transportation and pleasure on farms. These factors result in an extremely high percentage of farm residents and visitors riding quad bikes; this includes children. The implementation of mandatory training and licensing would enable WorkSafe to accurately record compliance of workplace use of quad bikes on farms. This still leaves the issue of rider safety within recreational use of quads. However, the fact that mandatory training is required for a licence to use a quad bike in the workplace, means principal users will be trained, and therefore be likely to pass on safety related information to family and friends.

Through the introduction of mandatory licensing / training, quad bike training will become commercially viable with training providers, being able to run courses in line with the national curriculum more often, and in more locations.

### **Greater rider protection**

#### **Helmets**

**Questions: In your experience, is there a high prevalence of quad bike users wearing helmets? What would encourage greater use of helmets? What is currently a barrier to the wearing of helmets? Would you support the creation of an Australian Standard for quad bike helmets? Should helmets be mandatory (legally required) for quad bike riders?**

The position of TACC is that mandatory use of helmets be required when using quad bikes, motorcycles and side-by-side vehicles in all circumstances, be it in the workplace or recreationally. Reported incidents of quad bike deaths, where the rider was not wearing a helmet supports anecdotal evidence that there is minimal use of helmets by farmers when using quad bikes. All riders of quad bikes should be wearing a personal helmet fitted to their head size for comfort, as there are no barriers to wearing one. A vast range of helmets are available to users of quad bikes, all meeting Australian and European standards, with models that incorporate blue tooth technology, additional sun protection and audibility for those requiring it. It is also TACC's view that quad bike riders require a well-fitting comfortable helmet. Individual safety and comfort requirements for work place use will not be found in low cost helmets or in shared use of a helmet. TACC's position is that there is no need for an Australian standard for quad bike helmets, this topic has been discussed for many years with pressure from farmers to avoid the wearing of a helmet, which in our view compromise safety. With mandatory use of helmets in the agricultural sector when using quad bikes, motorcycles and side by side vehicles will over time result in manufacturers modifying design to suit the needs of the market while retaining the safety design standards.

#### **Rollover protection**

**Questions: Have you installed rollover protection? If so, what has been your experience? If not, why not? Is the cost of installing rollover protection a barrier?**

Manufacturers of CPDs / OPDs have no evidence based material to validate their claims that these devices, if fitted, will not endanger the rider in the event of an accident. This being the case, these devices should not be fitted to quad bikes.

## **National standard for quad bikes**

**Questions: Do you support the development of an Australian Standard for quad bike design?**

TACC does not support an Australian design standard for quad bikes. Doing so would be extremely expensive and involve technical expertise that would need to be sought from overseas. Should Government choose this approach, collaboration on design standards for quad bikes should be undertaken with engineers in the major market (USA) to ensure consistency and integrity of design. The American National ATV Standard developed by members of the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (ANSI SVIA ATV Standard) which most quad bikes imported into Australia already meet, is systematically reviewed, and improvements are incorporated into these vehicles on a regular basis. Government may of course feed information into the designers of the standards based on solid evidence. TACC recommends against forming specific Australian design standards.

## **Consumer safety rating system**

**Questions: Would a safety rating system affect your purchasing choices in the future? If a system was implemented, what do you think should be included as part of the system?**

TACC would only consider a star rating system if the scoring criteria was evidence based, as is the case with the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) rating system. TACC does not support any safety rating system undertaken by the University of New South Wales - Transport and Road Safety research group (UNSW TARS), as there is no evidence to support the proposed engineering changes being put forward. At this time, it would not appear that any other Australian institution has sufficient expertise in this area with which to form a safety rating system. This topic should be considered in conjunction with the previous comments regarding a design standard. TACC believe any attempt to introduce a safety rating system for quad bikes in the Australian market place would cause confusion and unwarranted ambiguity.

## **Rebate scheme**

**Questions: Would a similar rebate scheme deliver improved quad bike safety in the Tasmanian context?**

Feedback from members of the Motor Trade Association of Australia, in NSW and Victoria particularly, have reported uptake of rebates for the purchase of "an alternative vehicle" (side-by-side vehicles being most the popular). A similar rebate scheme in Tasmanian would in our view yield a similar result.

## **Summary**

Quad bike safety has been an issue for the past twenty years, during which time numerous Coronial Inquests have been held. No definitive action has resulted from these inquests. Quad bikes are unique to Australian farms. The majority of models sold to farmers are of mid-size capacity, and are economical to purchase and use. They provide unparalleled transportation and utility use for farmers. Deaths and injuries from the use of quads continually relate to their misuse and disregarding manufacturer's recommendations for use (training, helmet and protective clothing use, no use by children under 16 years of age etc.).

The most effective way of influencing safe use of quad bikes on farms is by introducing licensing in association with mandatory training. This initiative will improve the operation of 'plant' in the agricultural community, as has been the case in other industries where licensing has been implemented.