NSW Coroner adds weight to quad bike recommendations

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The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is calling on the NSW Government to act swiftly on the recommendations handed down by a NSW coronial inquest into quad bike deaths. This inquest examined the deaths of nine people aged seven to 68 years of age between February 2009 and January 2015. Three of the dead were children.

Chair of the RACS Trauma Committee, John Crozier, says major trauma injuries from quad bikes have been on the rise across Australia, from 26 in 2010 to 51 in 2012.

“For each quad bike fatality, there are an additional 40 hospital admissions and 40 other non-hospitalised Emergency Department presentations. “We are particularly concerned about the number of injuries and fatalities among children,” Dr Crozier said.

“The children’s deaths examined as part of this inquest showed that all three were riding adult-sized quad bikes, some with pillion passengers, which is a breach of manufacturer guidelines. “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.

“The penalty for a quad bike rider who makes a careless judgement, or lacks a necessary skill, or has insufficient body weight or physical strength, all of which are more likely in younger riders, should not be death or serious injury.

“RACS urges the NSW Government to consider all available strategies to prohibit children under the age of 16 from riding adult quad bikes.”
Research shows that most injuries and deaths involve the bike rolling onto the rider and can occur at low speeds.

“Safe Work NSW needs support to implement a quad bike safety rating, which would empower customers to choose the safest machines available,” Dr Crozier said.

“Similar recommendations were announced following recent coronial inquests in Victoria and Queensland, and Safe Work NSW is well-placed to develop a star-rating system that other jurisdictions could adopt.

“RACS also encourages the Government to consider incentives for quad bike owners to undertake training before use of quad bikes to minimise the unique serious hazards they pose for even otherwise very experienced motor vehicle operators, but in particular, for those people who have never ridden one.”

About RACS

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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.

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