MEDIA RELEASE

Surgeons want quad bikes banned for under 16s

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The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is urging the New Zealand and Australian Governments to ban the use of quad bikes by children, following the latest death of a six year old girl in New South Wales.

The young girl died after a crash on a quad bike being driven by a 13 year old, taking the quad bike toll across Australia to 115 since 2010. The tragedy is sadly similar to the multiple incidents that occur in New Zealand every year.

RACS New Zealand Trauma Committee Chair Mr Li Hsee, said that the on-going harm caused to children by quad bikes had to stop.

“According to ACC (Accident Compensation Corporation) figures, every year more than 100 children hurt themselves on off-road vehicles in New Zealand.

“Of these, around one fifth will be hospitalised, and tragically, between three and six will die.”

“In Australia, the story is the same. Since 2001, 35 children aged 14 years or younger have been killed by quad bikes.”

“These figures are quite frankly unacceptable for both of our countries.

“No family should have to experience such heartbreak,” Mr Hsee said.

Despite having four wheels, quad bikes have a high centre of gravity and a narrow wheelbase, making them particularly unstable.

“Even at low speeds, quad bikes can easily roll over onto their operators.

“It is these types of accidents, where the vehicle rolls over, that cause the most injuries and deaths,” Mr Hsee said.

“Quad bikes, even when operated by an adult, leave very little room for rider error. A lack of judgement, a lack of skill, or even a lack of body mass and physical strength, can result in death or serious injury.”

Despite being smaller in size, quad bikes designed for children still pose a considerable risk.

“It is estimated that a child using a ‘child-sized’ vehicle is still twice as likely to be injured as an older rider on a larger machine. It is quite clear that these things should not be considered toys.”

“Surgeons are often on the front lines of these horrific injuries and we see first-hand the damage caused by quad bikes,” Mr Hsee said.

“We therefore strongly believe that in both New Zealand and Australia there is considerable room for improvement in regard to quad bike safety - especially where it involves children.

“We must ensure that children are not exposed to death or serious injury by being given access to quad bikes, regardless of whether they have been designed for children or not.”