

# Child Safety – Balancing Benefits VS Risk

Work is inherently good and rewarding for children, and farming offers many opportunities for children to develop work skills and benefit from farm life. Benefits often associated with growing up on farms include instilling a good work ethic, teaching responsibility, building character, learning about the life/death cycle, and instilling a passion, love and respect for the land.

However, farms also have the most dangerous and deadly worksites in Australia. The agricultural sector has had the highest rate of workplace accidents and fatalities for the last decade (2011-2021).<sup>2</sup> In 2020, the Agriculture sector recorded the highest fatality rate with 13.1 fatalities per 100,000 workers.

In Victoria the sector employs just over two percent of the working population yet accounts for nearly fourteen percent of all workplace fatalities

Staggeringly, fourteen percent of the farm related fatalities recorded nationally between the years 2011 and 2021 have involved children under fifteen years of age. Many of these incidents involved children that died whilst performing farm work assigned by parents.

Child representation in farm-related injuries in Australia has remained consistent over time, and the key hazards causing these injuries have remained the same for over 20 years. The factors contributing to high rates of child rates fatalities include child development and exposure to dangerous environments, the risk-taking culture, multi-generational farming families, lack of supervision, child labour and lack of regulation, limited targeted farm safety programs, underuse of safe play areas, financial priorities and poor understanding and operationalisation of the hierarchy of control.

Working Children on farms have been identified as vulnerable suffering premature death, morbidity and disability from injury. The blurred distinction between the farm as a home and a workplace means children are exposed to hazards typically not present in most homes. Additionally, most farming parents want to involve their children in the unique farming lifestyle, often giving them onfarm work responsibilities at a young age.

## GET HELP

VFF Email: [mofs@vff.org.au](mailto:mofs@vff.org.au)

VFF Phone: 1300 822 833