

The Impact of Childhood Injuries on Farms

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For every severely injured child, their family and their community, there is a story to be told.

For some, this story will ultimately be one of triumph, but sadly for others it is one of loss: loss of life, loss of ability, loss of prospect, loss of the joys of growing up, including the unique joys of growing up on a farm. For some the story of injury will be scarred by pain and fear, for others soothed by relief and reassurance, and for many a gritty mix of all these in the lived reality that is severe childhood injury and its consequences.

And what might these consequences be for children and families living in country Victoria?

Some consequences are felt immediately and terribly with preventable loss of a child's life, and all the pain, upheaval, and grief this inflicts on a family and a community. Indeed, Australian farming families face the harsh inequity, that their children are at greater risk of dying from injury than children living in the city. For others, the legacy of severe injury is life-changing and life-long. Most Victorian children surviving major trauma live with at least moderate level disability.

For the family, there can be a costly dislocation from their farming community, as days turn to weeks or months supporting their child in hospital and in recovery. Sadly for some, the emotional, social and financial tolls can make life on the land unsustainable.

Victoria is fortunate to have well-organised trauma systems, but even with this expert and compassionate care, some scars do not heal well, are more than skin deep... leaving their mark on the child, their family and communities.

Whilst each story of childhood injury is its own, defined by its own faces and places, their narratives inescapably share common threads. These are deeply personal stories, with an injured and loved child at their centre. These are profoundly important stories, now and always. And, these stories represent painful but real opportunities to respond and to learn.

And learn we must, because alongside each story of severe childhood injury on farms we must lay the true and challenging counter-narrative: severe injury is preventable, not inevitable. For children and families on farms there are positive lessons to be learned and positive actions to be taken, to prevent injuries today and in the future... stories that need never be told, lives never lost, pains never felt, futures never disrupted... leaving many more Australian children to thrive and experience the joy of growing up safely on a farm.