

**Lobby fears manufacturers will exit Australia and says farmers can fit protection devices themselves**

# VFF flips on quad bikes

By PETER HUNT

THE Victorian Farmers Federation has dumped its policy supporting mandatory fitting of roll bars to quad bikes at the point of sale, to one making farmers responsible for buying and bolting on the devices.

VFF president David Jochinke said his policy council recently shifted its position due to concerns many quad bike brands would no longer be available if manufacturers were forced to fit them.

Japanese and US quad bike manufacturers Honda, Yamaha, Kawasaki, Suzuki, Can Am and Polaris have warned they will pull out of the Australian market next year, rather than comply with new federal laws that demand OPDs are fitted to all new quad bikes from October next year.

The threat has already driven Queensland's farmer lobby group AgForce to oppose mandatory fitting of OPDs, calling instead for training and a national quadbike licensing regime.

Mr Jochinke said the VFF still supported the mandatory fitting of OPDs, but wanted to take the pressure off manufacturers by instead making farmers responsible for fitting them.

He said the US Government's Consumer Product Safety Commission's rollover studies had conclusively demonstrated the value of OPDs.

"The evidence (of their value) is overwhelming," Mr Jochinke said. "But we also want to make sure they're available to farmers."

Queensland OPD manufacturer David Robertson, said

it made no sense to force all farmers into fitting their own OPDs, given it was more efficient and cost effective for manufacturers to fit them.

"It's a bit like selling a car without an airbag, but saying you can't drive it until you fit one," Mr Robertson said. "The manufacturer also makes sure the OPD is suitable for the vehicle it's being fitted to."

He said WorkSafe laws in Victoria already required the fitting of OPDs.

"One of the big issues in Victoria is manslaughter legislation, which means if you don't fit an OPD on a quad bike and your worker is killed, you could go to jail."

The shift in AgForce and VFF policy puts pressure on the National Farmers' Federation, which led a coalition in July last year, that succeeded in gaining Federal Government support for new laws requiring OPDs to be fitted at the point of sale next year.

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