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For Immediate Release

Dead Tired & The Cost of Pushing Through *Farmsafe Australia calls for a cultural reset*

They're the jobs we push through at the end of the day. The early mornings after a late night. The can't-wait tasks in the middle of sowing, harvest, shearing or packing. Fatigue is one of the most under-recognised safety risks in Australian agriculture and it's costing lives.

As *National Farm Safety Week* continues, Farmsafe Australia is turning the spotlight on fatigue, as part of its "*Second Chances – Who Knows How Many You'll Get?*" campaign.

The message is simple: the 'just keep going' culture isn't working.

"Fatigue has long been normalised in agriculture," says Farmsafe Chair Felicity Richards. "We don't think twice about the 18-hour day. We shrug off brain fog, forgetfulness, dropping things or zoning out as just part of the job. But when you're tired, your decision-making suffers. You cut corners. You miss steps. You make mistakes. And in this environment, mistakes can be fatal."

This year's *Safer Farms Report* paints a clear picture. After recording the lowest on-farm fatality figure in 2023 (32 deaths), the sector was rocked in 2024 by 72 fatalities, the highest figure in over two decades. Severe injuries, meanwhile, have remained consistently high for more than a decade.

Richards says fatigue is a critical factor hiding behind many of these events.

"It doesn't always show up in the incident report but ask any farmer, and they'll tell you about the time they nearly rolled a machine, misjudged a gate, forgot a safety step or lost their footing after days of little sleep. Fatigue is the invisible risk that sneaks up on us because we've trained ourselves to ignore it."

The campaign encourages farmers to reframe fatigue as a *safety threat*, not a personal weakness.

Too often, the industry views pushing through exhaustion as a badge of honour. "But the truth is, real strength is knowing when to pause," Richards says. "Backing yourself to rest, or call in help, or wait for daylight, that's a safety decision. Not a vulnerability."

The release of this message during farm safety week aims to highlight the cultural shift needed across agricultural businesses. Whether it's shifting expectations around workload, improving rostering, or planning for pressure seasons ahead of time, the campaign urges practical changes that respect both the work and the worker.

The message resonates across all sectors; cropping, livestock, horticulture and beyond, particularly during high-pressure times.

"When you're under pressure to get the job done, it's easy to skip the toolbox talk or say yes to one more paddock," says Richards. "But too many families have been devastated by what can happen in those final hours of the day when someone was just too tired to see the risk."

Safer Farms, Safer Farmers

As part of the campaign, Farmsafe is encouraging teams and families to speak more openly about fatigue and warning signs.

Some of the campaign's key fatigue reminders include:

- ***Make time for the plan, not just the job*** – a short pre-job check can prevent long-term consequences.
- ***Don't let deadlines drown out danger*** – one honest conversation beats one emergency phone call.
- ***Build in time for safety*** – schedule backup and build buffer days into pressure periods.
- ***Call the huddle*** – a quick check-in can reveal risks someone else might not see.

The campaign also calls for leaders across the agricultural industry to set the tone.

"If you manage staff or contractors, your choices matter," Richards says. "You set the example, not just in how you work, but in how you rest. The way you talk about risk and decision-making shapes what others feel is okay."

The focus on fatigue is part of a broader effort to reframe how the sector thinks about near misses; not as lucky escapes, but as lessons worth learning.

"If you've had a near miss, the most powerful thing you can do is share what you learned. Safely. Thoughtfully. And in a way that helps others avoid making the same mistake," Richards says.

Farmsafe encourages rural organisations, businesses and industry bodies to use this week as a platform to start the conversation.

"Don't wait until you've had a scare to talk about fatigue," says Richards. "Schedule a break, check in with your crew, and create space for people to speak up. Because when someone's tired, really tired, we don't need to push them harder. We need to listen."

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About Farmsafe Australia

Farmsafe Australia is the peak industry body, bringing together farmers, industry experts, and agricultural stakeholders to ensure that every farm has access to safety information and education to create a safer place to live and work. With deep roots in the agricultural community, we share trusted resources and expert insights, ensuring every farm has access to support to help them protect what matters most.

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