

Saturday 26 July 2025

## The Clock Is Ticking

### *When pressure replaces planning on Australian Farms*

**Every farmer knows the feeling: the clouds are rolling in, the last bin's still waiting, the kids are due home, and the machinery's playing up. It's the kind of pressure that defines farming but it can also derail even the best-laid plans.**

As *National Farm Safety Week* continues, Farmsafe Australia is urging farmers to pause and consider how pressure, especially during peak seasons, is undermining safety and creating a perfect storm for near misses and serious incidents.

"Pressure is part of farming life, but the real danger comes when that pressure replaces planning," says Farmsafe Australia Chair Felicity Richards. "We see it time and again: a rushed job, a last-minute decision, a corner cut 'just this once.' And too often, that becomes the moment where something goes seriously wrong."

As farmers shared stories in the lead up to the campaign, pressure was identified as a recurring theme in many. These were moments where fatigue, deadlines, weather events, or simply a sense of being behind schedule led to compromised decisions, with consequences that could easily have turned tragic.

"Harvest and sowing are the obvious pressure points," Richards explains. "But we also see it during shearing runs, cattle work, or packing deadlines in horticulture. These are the times when people are most likely to push through fatigue, work without a plan, or skip key safety checks."

The problem, she says, is not a lack of knowledge, it's the override that pressure can cause.

"We know how to do things safely," Richards says. "But when the clock is ticking, or when there's financial pressure, it's easy to prioritise the job over the process. The irony is that rushing often leads to delays, whether that's from injury, broken gear, or a job needing to be redone."

To help address this, Farmsafe's campaign is encouraging all of those working and living on farms to build safety into the plan, not just bolt it on later.

#### **Tips include:**

- **Build Buffer Time:** Don't schedule work down to the last minute. Build in margins for weather, equipment delays or staff needs.
- **Quick Huddles Before High-Pressure Jobs:** Even a 5-minute chat before starting a big job can clarify roles, spot risks, and set the tone.
- **Know Your Pressure Points:** Identify when you're most likely to cut corners. Is it late in the day? Before knock-off? When contractors are on site?
- **Say No to 'Just This Once' Thinking:** Create a culture where safety doesn't get flexible just because the clock is ticking.
- **Pause for the Plan:** A few minutes of planning can save hours of re-doing a job later, or even prevent a tragedy.

Richards says it's important to remember that the culture of pushing through should not be seen as a strength. "There's pride in getting the job done. We respect that. But part of changing farm safety outcomes means recognising when that culture is also a risk."

*Safer Farms, Safer Farmers*

She adds that pressure isn't always just about the season, it's about mental load too.

"Pressure builds when you're tired, when your team is stretched thin, when you're juggling family, finances and decisions," she says. "That's why clear planning and shared responsibility are so important. If you're feeling the pressure, chances are your team is too. So talk about it."

And if a near miss does occur, Richards urges farmers to use that moment as a warning, not just a lucky close call.

*"A near miss is a second chance," she says. "But it only matters if we do something with it. If pressure caused you to slip up, plan now to make sure it doesn't happen again." Because on Australian farms, planning is a lifesaving tool.*

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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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