

MEDIA RELEASE

COMING TOGETHER TO OFFER OVER THE FENCE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Farmers across Australia are under constant pressure to build successful businesses and respond to unpredictable environmental threats all while navigating physical and emotional isolation and fatigue. With resources and awareness improving, this Farm Safety Week Farmsafe Australia are reminding Australian farmers to put their mental health first.

David Jochinke, Vice President of National Farmers Federation, said empowering farmers to discuss mental health is integral to ensuring stigma is eliminated in farming communities.

“I’ve known many great people in our community that we have lost to suicide. Farming can be a lonely game so ensuring that we are checking in on each other and asking those gentle probing questions to check in is so important to combat the black dog,” said Mr Jochinke.

Reflecting on the fact that farmers make up 2.2 per cent of Australia’s workforce but 13 per cent of injuries at work, Mr Jochinke wants to remind farmers of the importance of taking care for yourself and others.

“As farmers we have a responsibility to protect anyone who comes onto our farm. But we also need to go one step further and provide that essential social support our local farming community. Addressing mental illness collectively is one of the best ways we can improve farm safety across Australia,” Mr Jochinke said.

“With the right support network in place we can ensure that mental strain does not prevent our peers from making the right choice. If I can encourage even one farmer to seek support, I’ve done my part.

Mr Jochinke has committed to addressing mental health as an integral part of safety. Each day he has ‘toolbox talks’ with his employees, reminding them the safety protocols on-farm, including those that address mental health.

“Educating our community and local farmers on the importance of both physical and mental safety empowers them to take the necessary steps to protect themselves against all types of injury”.

A third-generation farmer from the Wimmera, Mr Jochinke knows firsthand the consequences immense daily fatigue, loneliness and mental strain can have on farmers.

“One of my earliest memories on the farm was seeing my uncle in a farming vehicle accident. The images of him haunt me, but the memory has been fundamental in my approach to safety,” said, Mr Jochinke.

Mr Jochinke maintains that everyday farmers are faced with decisions that provide them with the opportunity to put safety first. Having the knowledge to make the best decision for the farm, it’s employees and their safety is imperative.

Felicity Richards, Chairperson at Farmsafe Australia, believes that the blurred lines between home life and work life on the farm is one of the main contributing factors to the deterioration of farmer’s mental health.

“It’s time we consider the impact these blurred lines have on ourselves and on our families. Australian farmers need to recognise that part of staying safe on farm is protecting their mental health,” Ms Richards said.

“Implementing these boundaries is a very personal decision and everyone will have their own preference for how much they let work into their family time, part of protecting your mental health is navigating your personal bandwidth”.

This Farm Safety Week, Farmsafe Australia are encouraging farmers to just take a moment to consider the intangible factors that can impact safety on-farm.

“Every farmer understands the unique risks that come with working on their own farm. Taking one extra moment to weigh up factors such as fatigue, mental health or complacency is a first step towards creating a safer environment.”

To find out more about safety resources and how to keep yourself and your family safe, visit: farmsafe.org.au

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