



A Split Second – Furniture Tipovers

You wouldn't know it looking at her today, but a cabbage patch doll almost gave WB Kids and Postcards star Lauren Phillips a very different story to tell.



As parents and carers out there will know, when a toddler has their eye on a toy, there isn't much they will allow to stop them - certainly not a bookcase which looks like a ladder to a child with no fear.

It all started at a family friend's house when Lauren was 4. *'I was playing with my brother and his friend and there was a really big wooden bookshelf – right at the top there was a cabbage patch kid I was desperate to get my hands on. So I climbed up the bookshelf – but it wasn't attached to the wall – as I climbed the whole thing fell, like in slow motion. I ended up underneath it.'*



My brother and our friend got me out of it. It was actually amazing – a 5-year-old would never be able to pick up something that heavy normally. One lifted it up from the end and the other pulled me out.

It had totally smashed my face in, I'd bitten through my tongue, split my face. The way the shelves fell, one went above my head and one on my shoulder. The doctor said that if it had been just a few centimetres either way it would have got me right across the neck and broken my neck. It could have been a different story if a couple of centimetres either way."

Lauren said her Mum still shudders talking about it.

"My parents took me straight to Emergency. I had stitches down my face and we didn't know what the short term or long-term injuries would be. They did the best they could do and then I had to keep going back for check-ups. I had a tumour in my cheek from the accident - one side of my face looked like I had a tennis ball on it. It became evident as my swelling went down that the lump wasn't going away. It wasn't obvious day to day and it wasn't cancerous, but it came up straight after the accident. I can still see in photos until I was 20, it was a ball under my cheek on one side of my face."

Lauren was fortunate that her story has a happy ending - unfortunately 22 child deaths in Australia since 2001 from toppling furniture has led to a very different outcome for many families. In the US, approximately 1 child dies every 10 days from a furniture tipover, leading to the development of a powerful campaign called ['Anchor It.'](#)

Skye Quartermaine [lost her 22-month-old son Reef](#) in October 2015 when an unsecured chest of drawers fell on him. Kirstie and Tim [lost their 3 year old son Blake](#) when a bookcase which had been affixed to the wall at a previous location fell on him.

While awareness of this issue has been on the increase due to campaigns from [Kidsafe](#), the [ACCC](#) and families including Skye and Kirstie, there is still more that can be done to protect our children.



A great step in the right direction from industry is the provision of furniture straps with most new furniture. It's up to families now to ensure these are used to [affix items to the wall when they erect furniture](#).

But there are still other barriers. Renters are currently required to seek permission from their landlords if they want to protect their children. The [Victorian](#) and [Western Australian](#) State Governments have led the way with new legislation passed in Parliament recently which will enable renters to make these changes without their landlord's permission when it comes into effect in 2019.

This National Kidsafe Day, Kidsafe Australia are calling on all State and Territory Governments to follow suit and introduce this life saving, common sense measure into legislation.

Skye has been campaigning for this change through Bolt it Back For Reef; heartbreakingly, she had sought and been denied permission from her landlord to affix the bookcase which led to Reef's death. She urges all State Government's to make the change, saying ["You can fix a hole in a wall but you can't fix that hole in your heart."](#)

Lauren said about her near miss: *"It should have been attached to the wall – it was an accident waiting to happen."*

Her message to families is clear: *"It might take you 5 minutes or 10 minutes. It might be a pain but it will be worse if it does fall on someone – there is no amount of time you can get back."*

For further information please visit:

Kidsafe www.kidsafe.com.au

ACCC [product safety website](#)