

National Kidsafe Day, 23 October 2018

'Call for urgent changes to tenancy laws'

Since 2001 at least 22 children under the age of 9 have died in Australia from toppling furniture or televisions, with children under **3 years of age** at greatest risk.

In the lead up to National Kidsafe Day, Kidsafe Australia is calling for urgent changes to rental tenancy laws around the country to enable the securing of televisions and other heavy items to walls and floors, in a bid to prevent serious tip over injuries and deaths.

Scott Phillips, Kidsafe Australia spokesperson, stated that small children's curiosity and lack of awareness of danger places them at increased risk of injury from TV and furniture tip overs.

"Children are naturally inquisitive and common household furniture can look very different and interesting from a toddler's perspective - for example, they may see items of furniture like bookcases and shelves as a ladder to gain access to reach an item that is stored up high", said Mr Phillips.

Kidsafe Australia has urged State and Territory Governments throughout Australia to follow recent action by the Victorian and Western Australian Governments and pass changes to legislation to allow renters to make minor approved modifications to their home without requiring permission from the landlord. This includes the act of securing televisions and other heavy items to walls and floors to prevent tip-over incidents.

In the interim, parents, grandparents and carers are being urged to be proactive and check every room in their home for toppling hazards and anchor any tall or unstable furniture or large TVs to prevent injury to children.

Furniture Safety Tips

Top Five Tips to Reduce the Risk of Furniture Tip Overs

1. Select furniture with broad and stable bases.
2. Secure any unstable furniture such as bookcases and televisions to the wall or floor with brackets.
3. Do not leave any items such as bottles, toys or remote controls on top of furniture that may tempt young children to climb up to reach them.
4. Only place TVs on furniture designed specifically to hold them.
5. Lock drawers to prevent children opening them and using them as steps.

The Lauren Phillips Story



Popular Australian television presenter, Lauren Phillips, found herself underneath a 3-metre-tall bookshelf when she was just 4 years old. She was visiting some friends with her family and distinctly remembers:

"Right at the top of the bookshelf 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."

"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 could have got me right across the neck and broken my neck."

Lauren hopes that sharing her story will help spread awareness about the dangers of furniture tip-overs and how they can be prevented, advising that the bookshelf:

"Should have been attached to the wall – it was an accident waiting to happen."