

# ***VICTIM'S GRANDFATHER***

## **CALLS FOR DOCUMENTATION TO UNDERPIN BLIND CORD SAFETY**

**A GRANDFATHER WHO LOST HIS GRANDDAUGHTER WHEN SHE BECAME TANGLED IN A LOOPED BLIND CORD AND WAS HANGED IS CALLING FOR INSTALLERS OF WINDOW FURNISHINGS TO CARRY A DOCUMENT THAT VERIFIES THEY HAVE LEARNT THE BASICS AND ARE QUALIFIED FOR THE TASK.**

His recommendations are included in a submission to the ACCC in response to its Discussion Paper on a proposed service standard for corded internal window coverings that was issued in October last year.

John Williamson, whose granddaughter Meesha Jaide Williamson passed away in September 2006, told how the safety device designed to stop the cords dangling in her bedroom had been attached with double-sided tape rather than screws.

The incident occurred after the double-sided tape became loose. The company that installed the product was fined \$8800.

Since that tragic date, Williamson has become a determined voice demanding blind cords be treated in the same way as residual current devices or smoke detectors that must be attended to before the sale or rental of any property.

Also understanding that anyone can install a blind at the moment, he is calling for installers to carry a card that recognises they are qualified for the task, that they have undertaken the education necessary to complete the job correctly. "At the moment, a blind could be installed by, for example, a builder or a labourer and they're not part of the window coverings industry; they might not know how things should be done," he said. "There have to be standards that are clear to everyone."

Concerning to Williamson was the current industry practice where the person quoting for a job determined where a cord would be positioned. His understanding was that position could not be altered when the installer arrived to complete the task.

"Everyone says don't put cots near a window but, in lots of places, that's not possible," he said. "We need to have products that are safer rather than say we shouldn't do this or that."

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Williamson raised several other safety issues that, he claimed, were not addressed in the current national regulations for the installation of corded window coverings.

"Both industry and government advise people that if there is a looped cord to cut it and put a safety device on the end or to put two beads on the end to get rid of the loop," he said. Williamson suggested these options provided a false sense of security. A loop could form if a breakaway device was activated and the cord was swinging in a breeze from an open window. A breeze could also lead to a loop forming when beads were attached. A similar scenario could take place if the warning tags were incorrectly attached.

The current standards could not be met, he claimed, for heavy wooden venetian blinds due to their multiple cords while the cord for roller blinds could break leading to a situation where a significant length of cord is on the ground presenting another safety risk.

He was also concerned by hidden cords on venetians and cellular blinds, saying they were easy to access by little fingers and had led to deaths in the US.

In an ideal world, Williamson said he would like to see cord-free window coverings but for now, he was calling for initiatives to encourage research into finding better and safer solutions. "We need people to think towards the future to make these products safer," he said.

Williamson is the Australian representative for Parents for Window Blind Safety (PFWBS) which was named a runner-up in the Kidsafe category in the 2011 WA Department of Commerce Awards.

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JOHN WILLIAMSON,