

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Submitter Comments:

Being an avid cyclist my whole life - commuting, recreation, exercise and competition - I am a huge advocate for travelling by bike. I am also a huge advocate for bike safety, especially as I have school age children who are avid cyclists, and who ride to school daily, and use their bikes to get around the neighbourhood. In the last 8 months, we did purchase a pedal-powered E-bike, with a top speed of 25kmh, that is primarily for my 12 year old son (who has a physical disability) to use as part of commuting to school, and we are considering a 2nd E-bike for my 15 year old daughter. We have found that the E-bikes provide the option to take a bicycle instead of the car when carrying an amount of school gear (including sports gear and musical instruments) and bags that can be quite difficult to take when riding a normal bike. E-bikes also provide a positive "green" form of travel for commuting. There are a number of categories that are important for the government to consider in creating any legislation to help regulate E-bike Safety: 1. The equipment - bicycle & accessories 2. The rider - competency for riding and knowledge of road rules for bikes 3. The other road users - awareness for bicycle safety & road rules for sharing the road with bikes 4. The infrastructure - availability of bike lanes and routes that Ebikes can travel safely. With regard to equipment - I believe that the number one rule/law that needs to be enforced is wearing a helmet, properly clasped. Fines should be issued for not wearing a helmet. In the case of minors not wearing helmets, fines should be jointly issued to parents to make them liable to ensuring their children follow the rules. Parents buy the children the E-Bikes - so they should be the ones most invested in and most responsible for their children's safety. The second rule/law that should be enforced is any E-Bike driving in the dark needs to have head and taillights fitted and turned on. We see too many E-bikes riding down the street in complete darkness, no lights on, despite being fitted with a powerful headlight. Car drivers can't be held accountable for hitting an E-biker who cannot be seen in the dark. The third issue regarding equipment has to do with digital limiters of E-Bike Speed, but it also interacts with rider competency and knowledge, and potential licensure. All Ebikes in QLD are meant to have a maximum speed limited to 25km/h on public roads, but we know that many if not most are capable of speeds between 40-50km/h and even up to 60km/h with a simple digital "unlocking" of the limiter, which almost all owners do upon first use. I would suggest that allowing E-bikes to ride at a speed higher than 25km/h on public roads is reasonable, particularly for commuting purposes and promoting "green" forms of travel (people will use E-bikes much more frequently as a form of transport vs a petrol powered car, but only if the E-Bike can travel at a high enough speed to make it a time efficient option). The current regulations around speed are not realistic for your average commuter, and regardless, the current speed limits are also not enforced.

I believe a solution would be to create 2 genuine classes of E-bike and developing licensure, testing and enforcement according to those classes. For example, for the E-Bikes truly not capable of exceeding 25km/h - no licensure is needed to purchase and ride one; however, for those capable of exceeding 25km/h then a license with a mix of online testing for the road rules and some form of practical test would be required in order to purchase and ride on the street (similar to a boat license - i.e. license not needed for boat engines under 6HP, but required for engines over 6 HP). The legislation could also impose a minimum age for riding more powerful E-bikes, similar to what happens with boat engines, something like 15yrs old for bikes capable of doing more than 25km/h (Class 1) - which would require obtaining a 15+ Ebike license; whereas under 15yr olds would only be allowed to drive E-bikes that are incapable of exceeding 25km/h (Class 2) and would not need a license. Furthermore, exceeding a 25km/h speed limit for those without a license would also then be

enforced with fines (i.e. fines for any person caught riding a Class 1 EBike without having completed their license). Once again parents would be held liable for any fines for their minor children if they are caught riding a Class 1 E-Bike without having obtained a license. With regard to other road users, to help ensure E-Bike safety, the government needs to provide far more education to other road users (particularly drivers) about the rules regarding sharing the road with cyclists (make road sharing a significant part of driver's license testing as well as creating campaigns for TV and social media). Any messaging would need to take the tone of create a positive connection between drivers and all cyclists (including E-Bikes) - communicating the benefit to community, the importance of safety for cyclists lives, the possibility of creating a positive shared commuting/transport experience. If we are to promote cycling, regular and Electronic, as viable forms of public transport for the future, we need to change the attitudes and culture toward cycling. We need to break down the Us vs Them mentality of drivers vs cyclists. Of course, we know this is possible - as evidenced by successful cycling cultures around the world - particularly in Europe - like in The Netherlands (84% of people own a bike and 27% of all journey are made by bicycle). If you don't promote and build a culture of mutual respect, there will always be a much higher risk of injury or death for any cyclist riding on a public road. Finally, with regard to infrastructure, it is imperative that councils and state level governments provide infrastructure in terms of safe cycling lanes, particularly safe cycling routes to schools for all bikes and Ebikes. Currently, in our neighbourhood and in and around the southern Gold Coast, we have some cycling lanes, but many of them suddenly end in dangerous places with no safe option for a bike to keep going on the road (i.e. very little room for cars to pass, and bikes can easily be bumped by a distracted driver). Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit a perspective. I look forward to seeing action been taken to increase Ebike safety for all road users. Best Regards [REDACTED]