

## **Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland**

<b>Submission No:</b>	195
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<b>Publication:</b>	Making the submission and your name public
<b>Attachments:</b>	See attachment
<b>Submitter Comments:</b>	

## **Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland**

**Public Submission 17/5/2025.**

Encouraging members of the public to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle and to enjoy the hundreds of kilometres of well-lit and maintained walkways is commendable. In addition to these walkways being used by health-conscious people, they also provide a safe means for pedestrians to get from one place to another.

However, increasing numbers of motorbikes and other electric devices driven mainly by children who do not understand the road rules or rules of common courtesy on these walkways, now introduces an unacceptable risk. My concerns are not so much with the green e-bikes that are hired by tourists as I have not seen these being used incorrectly. My concern is with these electronically motorised bikes that it seems every child in the country now owns one.

These e-bikes are bikes driven by a motor. How that motor is charged whether by electricity or fossil fuel is not the issue here. I have witnessed on many occasions children without helmets going at deadly speeds in amongst pedestrians. A pedestrian cannot leave the path safely without stopping and checking what might be about to knock them over if they move to their right. I personally have been startled by an e-bike shooting past me at speed and close to me when I didn't hear it coming up behind me. If I had have moved only slightly to my right, it would have clipped me. These bikes travel too fast to stop safely in an emergency.

These young riders do not just ride on footpaths or in bike lanes. They are on the roads. Don't take my word for it, stand near a high school at the end of the school day and watch what happens.

During the recent school holidays, I was travelling on Currumbin Creek Road and two young boys came at me down the middle of the road on two of these bikes, one was travelling on one wheel i.e. the front wheel was in the air.

On another occasion an e-bike was travelling on the road and then turned a sharp right into a pedestrian crossing just past the Currumbin RSL forcing the traffic to screech to a halt as he charged through the crossing. Is he a pedestrian or a motorist? Who would have been at fault if the car had hit the driver of this motorbike on this crossing?

This week as I was in my car coming off Stewart's Road and waiting at the lights at Gold Coast Highway at Tugun, a young boy on one of these bikes, ran a red light on the highway as the stationery traffic now faced a green light. No helmet and he was clearly excited about not obeying the rules.

There are no consequences for breaking the rules, that is assuming these children actually know what the rules are.

I am sure you are already considering the data from Hospital Emergency Departments and data from the police. It is highly likely the story that data tells is sufficient to take action to stop this crazy situation.

My sympathy is with the pedestrian or the driver of the car who without warning finds they are involved in an accident with potentially deadly consequences due to a situation that was unthinkable only a few years ago.

We have put children behind the wheel of a motorised vehicles and have let them loose on an unsuspecting public without ensuring;

- 1 That they have the mental and emotional capacity to understand rules relating to the use of the vehicle and the rules associated with being on the road or on the walkway;
- 2 That these road and walkway rules are explained to them and their understanding is tested before they can operate the e-bike.
- 3 That the vehicles are registered so red-light cameras and injured pedestrians (if still conscious), are able to identify these drivers.
- 4 That the maximum speed of the vehicle is limited to a safe speed and this cannot be tampered with
- 5 That helmets are mandatory
- 6 That the number on one bike is limited.
- 7 That we have the means to police and enforce these rules. If we do not have the resources to police and enforce the rules, then we have to rethink how these motorised vehicles are being used, by who and where.

Unfortunately, my concerns aren't limited to the children in charge of these bikes although they seem to be 90% of the problem. In Vietnam I saw families on motor bikes – a common sight. I never thought I would see it in Australia. Two adults and 2 children on one of these motorised bikes heading for the Pirate Park at Palm Beach. When did this become ok?

Adults who may have lost their license due to dangerous driving or other offences can now buy one of these bikes and once again, travel on the roads. Perhaps when a driver's licence is cancelled it would be wise to extend the cancellation to any motorised form of transport, i.e. not just a car.

There seems to have been an explosion in ownership of these motorised vehicles over the last 12 to 18 months. Do we have any way of knowing how many e-bikes and e-scooters are in Queensland? How quickly is this number increasing by each month? What is the projected number in 1, 2 and 3 years?

Can we expect the current number of injuries to increase by the same percentage as the increased number of these motorised vehicles? I suspect the answer is yes.

It will not be long before it is too dangerous for pedestrians to use the walkways and the good intentions of providing the safe means by which people can maintain their health and wellbeing with walking will be lost.

Lynda Hepworth