

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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At a recent community meeting on the matter arranged by Laura Gerber, according to the senior police officers present, the police make no attempt to apprehend the riders of these illegal 'personal mobility devices' due to the inherent dangers of giving chase. Also a factor is the complete inability of police to follow where these rideables are capable of going. Banning their sale and importation seems to be closing the gate after the horse has bolted. How many of these units have now made their way into our country in the past few years? Hundreds of thousands no doubt. My question here, is what have other countries done to manage this trend? European countries, being less inclined to 'nanny state' their populations than our governments seem to, have integrated this emerging technology for personal mobility into their societies in remarkable ways. This is due primarily to being somewhat farsighted in the planning of their cities and civic centres, whereby spaces are people centric with well integrated public transport. As opposed to how we plan our spaces traditionally to facilitate the movement of cars. The results of our approach is on display daily, whenever we try to go somewhere, like our work place, we must first account for the time we will be forced to sit in the inevitable traffic jams. Not to mention the anxiety of constant vigilance of what can and does happen in heavy traffic. I note there are still people who feel compelled to text while driving at 100kmh on the M1! As a cyclist I have had numerous close calls with idiot drivers, particularly those who harbour a certain attitude toward riders of bicycles and in the last couple of years I have now experienced a number of near misses on pathways with idiots on battery powered machines. so I am not a huge fan just yet. But its not the machine I have a problem with. Its the riders. Unfortunately, Australian society for some reason has developed in a direction that can no longer be described as a 'high trust' society. The behaviour of idiots gives rise to the inevitable cries for nanny state solutions. This should be avoided. What's required is the application of improved management techniques. So, two societal and technological dynamics are occurring simultaneously. The worsening situation on our roads due to increasing gridlock situations caused by the overuse of the private car and then the exploding popularity of 'illegal to ride outside private property' personal mobility devices. Ironically, the latter not being in the least subject to the aforementioned gridlock. And both arrangements of which the police appear completely powerless to do anything about. I have a proposal. Rather than instituting a crackdown, which is likely to have limited effectiveness anyway, we should instead try to emulate the European methods first, by facilitating this alternative to the private car. We will need to utilize some of that farsighted thinking which seemed to have worked for them. Amsterdam is a prime example of this principle, and Queensland has numerous natural advantages over Noord-Holland. As I write this, I can hear kids whizzing past on their electric bikes or scooters on the street outside my house. Many, if not all schools can now count the number of these devices parked on their grounds in the hundreds. The genie is out of the bottle ladies and gentlemen. Time to adapt and build our communities in such a way as to accommodate this emergence and to view it as part of the solution. A new way of people moving about locally is upon us. Technology is once again forcing change and a paradigm shift in our thinking about it is required. As we should now all be aware, traffic behaves in a similar way to gas. It will always expand to fill whatever volume is provided. Build it and they will come is the way it works. More and better roads of course encourages its use. While we must construct bigger better roads to accommodate the growing number of private cars every year, in a game of never ending catch-up, we should also be investing (far more than currently we do) in protected bikeways and pathways that are safely segregated from traffic and divided into pedestrian and rider zones and encourage less reliance on cars. There are already some notable success stories locally. Examples of such are the Bicentennial Bikeway, the Kedron Brook Bikeway, the currently under

construction 'shared path' adjacent the Coomera Connector and the bikeway partly opened alongside the southern section of the M1, which will eventually connect Varsity Lakes to Elanora/Palm Beach. These are (or set to become) highly utilized pieces of public infrastructure. Now if only these pathways were also shaded, in addition to being safe. Pathways should not only be practical but attractive to use as well, so as to encourage more people to get out of their cars. "More people riding more often" I believe is the term promoted by our transport authorities.

Such initiatives will also coincide with 'end of trip' facilities at workplaces for people to clean up and store expensive bicycles and assorted PMD's. It will provide more opportunities for public art installations and add value in a cultural context. It will likely facilitate more social interactions. It will have a positive impact on traffic congestion, which means less road rage, perceptions of isolation, fear and everyone's favourite, parking anxiety/competition. It will also mean generating out of the box ideas in our approach to integrating public transport and the better public spaces that come packaged with that, which prioritise people over cars. We should expect to see overall improvements to physical and mental fitness outcomes. The consequences of this kind of shift can only equate to a healthier and perhaps a kinder or at least less pessimistic society. If the Europeans can do it, we can to.