

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Apart from diversion of funds from traditional council activities, the invasion of walking paths has had adverse consequences with injury to walkers; over two thirds of bicycle/pedestrian interactions occur on paths. Figures from the UK, showed an annual average of around 70 serious injuries and 3 deaths resulting, with near accidents 50 times more common. Having just survived a "close encounter", I can understand there can be a discouragement of walking activity because of threatening cycle use, resulting in reduced, rather than increased physical activity; that risk has now escalated with the arrival of e-scooters. In the UK they are banned on roads as they do not comply with regulations for cars, they are also illegal in Greece and Holland. In Australia they are allowed on pedestrian paths but are illegal on roads; regulations vary from state to state and federal consistency is needed, both in their use and accident insurance. Statistics from Victoria estimate 115 accidents per million trips; these numbers are rising dramatically, an over 200% increase last year. In 2023, the Royal Melbourne Hospital alone, had 247 riders and 9 pedestrians injured, with 21 suffering major trauma and one death. The other introduction, from improved batteries, has been powered e-bikes, different battery sizes, 200W with pedal assist, 250W legal in NSW; sizes of 500W, made up to 1000W allow faster speeds. All require a helmet, and a licence if on road; they are allowed on footpaths but at reduced speed, scooters now outnumber e-bikes 5:1. In some countries 1 in every 2 bikes sold is now electric. Some would consider reduction in pedal bike sales a retrograde step towards fitness, but at least they had a bell to notify walkers of their impending risk! Installation of paths is not cheap, as far back as 2009, the cost of dedicated shared paths was put at \$1 million per kilometre; woke Merri-bek Council (formerly known as Moreland) last year allocated \$4.5 million to constructing paths; Sydney City has a budget of \$69 million, over 4 years, for 25km of bicycle infrastructure projects, Perth City plans to spend \$347 million over 4 years. At last, one council has had enough; Melbourne City Council has followed Paris and introduced a ban. Auckland has cancelled e-scooters, but on grounds of a licensing scam, rather than safety; Brisbane has now followed suit, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The cascade continues, with Townsville and ACT the latest to dump the company. Perhaps other councils, who wish to virtue signal with footpaths, should put their best foot forward (pun intended), by instead spending rate-payers money on planting trees? Graham Pinn update September 2024