

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

Submission No:	543
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Publication:	Making the submission and your name public
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

The Queensland Government Parliamentary Enquiry into e-scooter safety & use in Qld

Pedestrian Safety on Footpaths in Brisbane.

There is now overwhelming evidence of the harm being caused to pedestrians in Queensland who share footpaths with e-scooters and cycles.

I recognise that the use of e-scooters and bikes is an essential element of active transport and contribute to reducing congestion on our roads during peak hours.

However, the current laws are both inadequate in that they ignore some key issue and are not enforced to provide sufficient deterrent to those who blatantly disregard them.

I also understand that there are some jurisdictional issues between state and local government in terms of who has responsibility for differing elements of the matter of regulating the use of our footpaths by e-scooters and bikes.

I have structured my submission under key headings for clarity

Need for an overarching state law

To clarify jurisdictional issues and ensure consistency across Queensland, the Queensland Government law should state the different jurisdictional responsibilities e.g. State sets and enforces speed limits (police) and sets minimum standards for signage. Council manages pathway signage and infrastructure.

Law to cover all of e-scooters, e-bikes and ordinary bikes using bike paths and footpaths.

The current laws cover only e-scooters and set speed limits for operation on bike and pedestrian paths for the e-scooters. However, e-bike and ordinary bike riders have no similar limits imposed and often treat pedestrian paths as equivalent to velodromes weaving at significant speed through pedestrians.

A speeding e-bike or ordinary bike can cause similar harm to pedestrians as e-scooters.

In the past bikes were not permitted to use footpaths, and the opening of footpath to bikes, while improving the safety of bike riders and reducing potential bike/vehicle collisions has not come with concurrent regulation of the responsibilities and behaviour of bikes on footpaths.

Thus, the law should cover all of e-bikes, e-scooters and ordinary bikes and scooters using shared pedestrian and bike paths.

Age Limit

We should require e-scooter and e-bike riders to be 16 years of age and over – similar to laws in other states.

The recent Sunshine Coast injury study shows significant injury to under 16s using these powerful mobility devices.

Helmet Compliance

A significant proportion of riders, particularly of commercial e-scooters and bikes, do not wear helmets placing themselves at significant injury risk. When injury occurs our public health system has to fund the treatment and rehabilitation from injury placing additional burden on these facilities and our tax system which fund them.

Clearly current deterrents are not effective and we need both a significant increase in fines and significantly more resources put into policing of both helmet use and overspeed management.

Footpath and cycle path speed signage

I have previously raised this matter with the State Government Minister for Transport and Minister for Police. In their responses they advised that the matter of signage on footpaths was a matter for the Brisbane City Council. While this jurisdictional issue is acknowledged, I suggest that there needs to be an overarching state law that sets a uniform standard for this issue for progressive implementation by local governments across the state.

On our roads we have regular signage reminding motorists of the speed limits as they vary from point to point. However, there is no similar signage on our footpaths to remind bicycle and scooter riders of the changing situation and speed limits.

My understanding is that where there are bicycle/scooter lanes separated from pedestrian paths the speed limit for bikes and scooters is 25kph on those dedicated paths. However, when the paths are shared bike/pedestrian paths the speed limit is reduced to 12kph. It is clear that many riders are unaware of or wilfully ignore these limits.

In the same way that motorists are continually reminded of changing conditions and speed limits on the roads, we need to have speed signs on our footpaths to reflect changing conditions there.

By way of example in my area in Kangaroo Point:

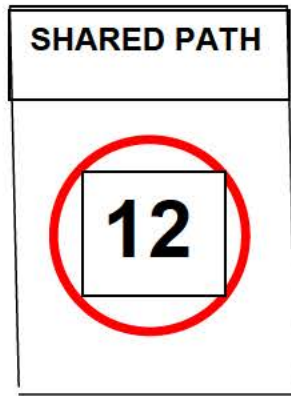
- The footpaths on the story bridge and adjacent roads are shared bike/pedestrian and not wide enough to designate separated bike and pedestrian paths. Yet often while walking we find bikes and scooters zooming past as if they were in some form of road race. There is NO speed signage evident on these footpaths.
- The river walks around Kangaroo Point are a mix of shared and separated paths with regular changes between separated paths and shared paths with no signage to indicate a change in speed limits with the changed conditions.

I am sure that this is also the situation throughout Brisbane.

I acknowledge that ignorance of speed limit requirements is no excuse should an incident occur. But when a collision between a bike or scooter and a pedestrian occurs, particularly an elderly pedestrian, it can have life altering consequences for the person hit by the speeding scooter or bike.

For this reason, we need reminder speed signage on footpaths, particularly given it is now accepted practice for bikes and scooters to have the right to use footpaths which were previously reserved for pedestrians only.

I suggest a sign along the following lines be used at the start of all shared pathways, and at all subsequent pathway entrance points: (please excuse the amateur graphics).



The signs should be at rider eye level beside the path or alternatively stencilled on the pathway.

I acknowledge that this will come at some cost to council both in terms of initial installation and also maintenance – but this is a necessary cost to manage this significant pedestrian safety issue. The cost will be more than offset by the reduction in harm to pedestrians and so is an appropriate public safety investment.

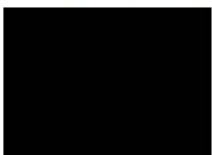
Enforcement

Resources need to be allocated to ensure:

- Public awareness of these road and pedestrian safety issues and the obligations placed on bike and scooter riders.
- Enforcement of the laws particularly speed but also helmet use. This should include:
 - Permanently allocated police patrols
 - Use of speed cameras – but these would need to be staffed to stop and issue breach notices to offending riders.

I am available for contact should the committee or committee researchers wish to clarify any of the issues I have raised.

Yours Faithfully



Tony Drake
5th May 2025