

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

<b>Submission No:</b>	581
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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

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## Summary

E-mobility devices are essential for many Queenslanders—especially youths, low-income individuals, and those in areas underserved by public transport. They offer affordable, independent transport where traditional options fall short. However, current safety discussions are dominated by negative experiences, overlooking the devices' social benefits.

Most unsafe behaviour involving e-mobility devices is already illegal. Rather than imposing new restrictions on all users, this submission recommends targeted reforms to improve enforcement and accountability:

1. Introduce a new “open” vehicle class for e-mobility devices with fewer technical limits but mandatory registration plates.
2. Create a dedicated public reporting portal for incidents involving e-mobility devices.
3. Expand police enforcement powers including classifying unregistered high-speed use and helmet violations as hooning offences.

These changes would allow responsible users to retain access while giving authorities tools to act against misuse—striking a fair balance between safety and accessibility.

## Introduction

A survey of the existing submissions for the inquiry into e-mobility device safety is unfortunately heavily skewed towards members of the community negatively affected by the improper use of e-mobility devices. This is unfortunate as e-mobility devices provide massive societal benefit to many of the most underrepresented Queenslanders. In this submission I will attempt to outline the benefits of e-mobility devices to certain key communities, describe shortcomings with existing regulations, and possible options moving forward that will hopefully preserve the benefits for those doing the right thing and address the concerns of those negatively impacted by bad actors.

## Positive case

E-mobility devices provide a low cost low impact transportation option to Queenslanders who would otherwise be unable to travel or would be overburdened by car ownership.

For a youth in Queensland there are few options for independent travel, chilling their ability to work and have healthy well rounded lives. In Queensland it is impossible for someone under 17 to operate a car without supervision as they [can not obtain their P1 \(red P plates\) until 17](#). While I was unable to find Queensland specific numbers, there has been a secular trend throughout Australia of fewer youths are getting their driver's license and when they are they are getting it later. Additionally since COVID [the price of used cars in australia has risen almost 50%](#) making it harder for Queenslanders at the beginning of their lives to get their start. Ultimately, this means they must rely more on taxis and ride-sharing services, public transport, and lifts from friends and family.

Taxi and ride share services are beyond the price point of most youths, especially in regional areas. For low income families in regional areas in low coverage zone it is simply unaffordable for teens to be ferried everywhere by taxis or the like.

Public transport is extremely circumstantial and provides a solution for only some. Adequate public transport service isn't always available in regional areas, late at night, and in industrial areas. Where it is available it may require the youth to travel substantial distances on foot from their house, to the bus stop, and from the bus stop to their actual destination. All of this means that a youth will think twice before signing up to anything that might involve travel. Given the real and perceived risks associated with using public transport and walking home, late a night, in possibly hostile weather many parents reasonably conclude they don't want their kids risking it. My sister is an example of this, at 18 she worked in hospitality and finished late, her options for getting home were:

- wait for up to an hour for the bus in front of bars and clubs where drunken patrons would shamle about on the street
- Uber

She didn't feel safe and neither did my mother so as a result they took the costly alternative of paying for Uber most nights cutting deeply into my sisters meager wages.

Public transport is also less direct and involves frequent stopping making it much slower than more direct methods, at one of my jobs I had the options of: a 20 minute car ride, 28 minute bike ride, or 60 minutes by public transport that required 3 buses. At another I had the choice of a 12 minute drive, 23 minutes by bike, or 70 minute by bus. My destinations were each in the greater Brisbane area and were out of the way enough that they didn't warrant a direct service. This isn't an argument against public transport but a call for a better contextualization of its strengths and weaknesses. For the benefit of all Queenslanders the regulation and legislature must support a mixed transport system that meets the needs of all at their various stages of life.

Ferrying teens between social gatherings, hobbies, sports, and jobs places demands on friends and family and not every teen has access to someone who can give them a lift when they need it. When parents are busy working, they have their own lives, siblings are competing for lifts, and lifts are needed on short notice is can be extremely difficult for youths to obtain transportation. Additionally there are youths who simply don't have the social networks to give them lifts everywhere. Lifts are a part of the solution, but they are not a silver bullet. Lastly, most parents are keen to foster increased independence in their children and get some of their time back.

Where I live there is a group of three boys in their early teens. They each wake up before dawn, hop on their escooters which they've fitted with rod holders and seats and go fishing off a nearby jetti. This is an example of a good legal social activity that keeps them out of trouble that is only possible due to e-mobility devices. Riding bikes or scooters with buckets of water and all their kits simply isn't feasible. Its too early for public transport. And, I suspect, their parents don't want to have to get up before dawn in the mornings. The foundation of their social lives is access to e-mobility device.

The [Department Of Education 2024 Early School Leavers report](#) noted that for early school leavers who were not in education, employment, or training the number one reason they were unsuccessful finding a job was transport difficulties. The [Jobs and Skill Australia Labour Market Dashboard \(Feburary 2025\)](#) for Queensland notes that youth employment is more than double the general rate (9.0% vs 3.9%) and as unemployment has gone down it has decreased at a slower rate for youth. One thing the government can do to not make things worse is to avoid regulatory changes that make e-mobility device more difficult to acquire, use, and maintain.

## Recommendations

Based on the other submissions for this inquiry, Operation Elektra (original report on QPS website is missing, maybe ask Hon Laura Gerber for more details), and anecdotal evidence much of the objectional and unsafe behaviour is already illegal. As such placing additionally regulatory burdens on law abiding e-mobility device users will not make Queenslanders safer. Instead, changes to regulation and legislature should be directed towards giving police greater enforcement powers while reducing redtape that does nothing to impede bad actors. As such three interlinked reforms are suggested:

1. Update existing classes or create a new class of vehicle for "open" e-mobility device. This new category wouldn't be subject to wattage limits or motor assistance caps, would preferably have higher speed limits, but would require registration plates to be affixed and visible on the e-mobility device at all times.
2. Create a dedicated community portal for reporting e-mobility device related incidents and educate the public regarding its existence.
3. Expand the existing hooning powers (Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, 2002 amendments) to include driving unregistered e-mobility devices traveling above 25 km/h as a Type 2 Offense. Clarify the existing acts to include riding without a helmet as careless driving. This will give police powers to impound or immobilise e-mobility devices belonging to anyone who hasn't registered and isn't following existing laws. This gives police the capacity to strongly incentivize that citizens move to the new open e-mobility device class and intervene decisively with bad actors.

Item 1 serves several purposes:

- Currently, the [Queensland rules for electric bicycles](#) place arbitrary restrictions on the wattage of motors and the operations of the motors, these limits do not directly contribute to public safety and create obstacles to good usage. As an example, there is an older couple in my area who use a dutch-style electric cargo bike for their shopping and visits to the doctor. As their vehicle is heavier and they are older they depend more on electrical assistance. A higher wattage motor would not place them at greater risk but would increase their range and allow them to more safely and reliably travel in hilly areas. Higher wattage isn't a risk factor, higher speeds are, and currently its extremely difficult for police to enforce speed laws or for citizens to report illegal activity.
- Registration plates vastly simplify enforcement. Citizens can report bad actors by reporting their registration number. Existing camera based enforcement mechanisms can be extend. Police won't be required to physically apprehend every bad actor to confirm their identity as they can observe their registration number. By having each e-mobility device self identity we can reduce issues associated with speeding, dangerous driving, and improper parking.

It is suggested that the registration plates are provided at-cost with minimal red tape. Arguably there should be a grace period when the plates are introduced where they can be obtained for free. The goal here is to as gently as possible encourage the vast majority of users to swap over to the new open class. The only requirement for requesting new plates should be that the registration plates can be positively linked to their owner (or parent in the case of minor).

By creating a new category with pathways for enforcement and free from cumbersome restrictions we can create a context where good citizens can more easily and effectively use e-mobility device and the law can actually be enforced against bad actors.

After a grace period and review period, it may be worthwhile amend the existing rules for e-mobility device so that unregistered e-mobility device are limited to contexts and speeds where they're unable to cause

harm (i.e. 12km/h maximum unless signed otherwise).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, e-mobility devices are a lifeline for many Queenslanders—particularly youths, low-income individuals, and those in areas underserved by public transport. While concerns about unsafe or illegal use are valid, these behaviours are already prohibited under existing laws and can be more effectively addressed through targeted enforcement rather than blanket restrictions. By introducing a new class of registered e-mobility devices with clear identification, improving enforcement mechanisms, and fostering community engagement through reporting tools, we can preserve the benefits of e-mobility for responsible users while curbing misuse. The path forward must be one of balance—supporting innovation and accessibility while equipping authorities with the tools they need to uphold public safety.