

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Submitter Comments:

Whilst I acknowledge this inquiry pertains to general e-mobility safety concerns, my comments predominantly focus on the plethora of rental e-scooters that local councils have rushed to allow in many towns and cities throughout Queensland. This is because I believe the introduction of such rental e-scooter fleets has caused nothing but a myriad of safety concerns which the councils, e-mobility hire companies and the local authorities have failed to address despite having ample time to do so. Their lack of interest has put the general community at unacceptable risk of injury and have resulted in completely avoidable accidents and incidents involving e-scooters. From what I personally witness on a daily basis, I have no hesitation in recommending the immediate withdrawal of rental e-scooters and e-bikes across Queensland with any perceivable benefits these machines supposedly bring to our communities being superseded by the frequent occurrences of dangerous riding behaviour which goes largely unpunished. The e-mobility companies are also frustratingly not being held to account for their lacklustre response to a growing issue. Seemingly led by a misguided notion by councils who are desperate to appear "green friendly" and actually believe having hundreds of battery-powered e-scooters available for hire (with the fleet maintained by what I assume are petrol powered vehicles) is somehow beneficial to the community, the actuality is that they have been a completely unnecessary, dangerous and visually unappealing addition to our local streets. Firstly, the amount of visual pollution these machines is staggering and does nothing for the aesthetics of our local communities, particularly when the first thing visitors see upon entering is dozens upon dozens of gaudy orange e-scooters cluttering up footpaths, toppled over on every street corner or unceremoniously dumped in the middle of our residential streets. However, much more concerning is the danger these machines present to the community, which as you know has resulted in many serious incidents, accidents which has put pressure on a healthcare system already under enormous pressure. Time, money and resources are used every time an e-scooter rider causes an accident which requires ambulances to be dispatched and patients to be admitted to hospital and cared for by our hard working doctors and nurses. Despite the blatant attempts by companies such as Neuron to spout ridiculous PR puffery and preposterous statements whenever genuine safety concerns are raised in the media (like their trademark '99% of all e-scooter journeys end without incident'), anecdotal evidence would suggest the vast majority of those who use rental e-scooters are clearly using the devices illegally and dangerously. I live and work in the local government areas of Rockhampton and Livingstone where Neuron has been allowed to operate by Rockhampton Regional Council and Livingstone Shire Council in the city of Rockhampton and in and around the town of Yeppoon. Every single time I see a Neuron e-scooter being used in our local communities, I can safely tell you that, nine times out of ten, the rider is unapologetically and intentionally breaking the law. On any given day, I see riders riding dangerously, disregarding the safety of those around them (particularly pedestrians), failing to wear helmets, doubling, tripling, riding whilst using a phone (occasionally even filming themselves), riding through red traffic signals, riding whilst clearly intoxicated (especially at night but hardly surprising when e-scooter companies have been permitted to position their machines in the vicinity of pubs and clubs). Additionally, some of the riders I see are clearly children who are treating these machines as their own personal toy. There is also an obvious ongoing issue surrounding school children in uniform using these machines after 3pm on a school day, usually sans helmet. Last September, Neuron boasted in our local media (CQ Today, 21/09/2024) that a combined total of 6,225 kilometres had been travelled on their contraptions in Rockhampton and Yeppoon since their inception in what was described as "astounding". I would have no hesitation in wagering that not even a quarter of that total would have been travelled legally. I'd also like to point out that as a

motorist, big brother always seems to be watching me and every other driver on the road. If I speed, go through a red light, fail to wear my seatbelt or use my phone while driving, there is an increasingly likelihood that I will be caught by a camera and almost instantly issued with a hefty infringement notice, and rightly so. It's a real shame e-scooter riders are not being held up to the same standard and are seemingly immune from prosecution. The riders know it and are exploiting the almost non-existent attempts at policing their behaviour. By now, e-mobility companies should have implemented a proactive and effective strategy and the technology to ensure their riders were doing the right thing at all times. By now, the local councils should have held the companies that they approved to operate in their communities to account. And rightly or wrongly, by now the police should have made some effort to actually patrol e-scooter usage and issue traffic infringement notices to those who flagrantly break the law, despite the pressure this puts on their resources. Because no agency seems to be interested in taking these measures, I reiterate that I have no hesitation in recommending the immediate withdrawal of rental e-mobility devices across Queensland. Until the technology is implemented which ensures that e-scooter riders are obeying the road rules at all times and are not riding them carelessly and those who do are immediately penalised for traffic infringements - and until those responsible for their implementation actually become responsible community members who care about community safety and police their use accordingly, then there is simply no need to have rental e-mobility devices in our communities. If you remove the availability of e-mobility devices, I'm certain the likelihood that innocent members of the public will be killed or sustain injury will be significantly decreased. It's too late for [REDACTED] in Western Australia but if the Queensland Government takes such an important, necessary and proactive approach, I know it WILL prevent another innocent person meeting the same tragic fate by some careless and arrogant drunk e-scooter rider who decides on the spur of the moment to thoughtlessly hire an e-scooter with a quick 'tap and go' despite how inebriated they are.