


Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Infrastructure for bikes.

There is inadequate infrastructure for all bikes. The coastal areas on the Gold Coast are a key example. Bikes have two choices, each of which is poor: riding on the busy Gold Coast Highway or riding on the coastal Ocean Path in conflict with pedestrians.

On the GC Hwy, bikes must compete with trucks, buses, heavy traffic volumes, and bike lanes that disappear and reappear. It is inherently very dangerous. The GC Hwy curve behind the Burleigh Heads headland and the GC Hwy bridge over Currumbin Creek are 2 cases in point. The roadway is narrow and there is no bike lane in these locations. It is treacherous for the many bikes that use these sections of GC Hwy.

On the coastal Ocean Path, bikes reach excessive speeds, creating many near-misses with pedestrians, joggers and children. Because of their speed, e-bikes are an especially hazardous.

The Solution:

In a word, *infrastructure*. In cities like Copenhagen, Amsterdam and now Paris, the infrastructural answer is on display. In these cities, there is physical separation of bicycle traffic from vehicular traffic on the one hand, and pedestrian traffic on the other. Dedicated bike lanes have kerbs and physical barriers such as planter boxes. These jurisdictions have worked to remove conflict between bikes and vehicular traffic and between bikes and pedestrian traffic.

Are push-bikes vehicles?

The traffic code might consider push-bikes as vehicles, but in the public's eye, push-bikes are viewed as "part-time vehicles" depending on their location. If they are on the road, bikes are seen as vehicles; if they are on the footpath, they are not.

There are ready examples of bikes having this chameleon character. For example, riders frequently pedal across crosswalks, expecting road traffic to stop as it would for pedestrians. And riders frequently pedal on footpaths as though they are "pedestrians on wheels". And yet, when on the roadway, bikes are viewed as vehicles and are expected to obey the rules of the road, like stopping at red lights.

The reality is that push-bikes are neither vehicles nor pedestrians. And forcing them into vehicle lanes or onto walking paths is inherently dangerous for everyone.

Are e-bikes vehicles?

E-bikes are closer to motorcycles than to push-bikes. Their appearance is that of a push-bike, but their functionality is that of a motor cycle.

E-bikes are frequently seen speeding along in traffic, even passing moving vehicles. They often flaunt the rules of the road, come out of nowhere and zoom every which way. They pass on the inside. We have observed them approach a red traffic light, skip up onto the footpath and then dart across the intersection before moving back onto the roadway.

The government and city councils have passively declared that e-bikes are not vehicles because e-bikes are allowed on footpaths and rental e-bikes are allowed to be abandoned regardless of location.

The Solution:

e-bikes should probably be registered, display number plates, be banned from pedestrian paths and be monitored by speed cameras and red-light cameras just as other vehicles are. They should be limited to the roadway or to dedicated bike lanes. They should be banned from footpaths.

Lime and other rental e-Bikes and e-scooters

Rental e-bikes, helmets and e-scooters are a scourge on the urban landscape. In cities around the world, rent-a-ride e-bikes and e-scooters have docking stations (e.g., CitiBikes in New York City). When you finish your ride, you return the bike to a docking station or a hefty penalty is added to your invoice.

In QLD, e-bikes and e-scooters are left all over the place...lying across footpaths in the Brisbane CBD, tossed into drainage ditches, left in the middle of a bridge span and abandoned in public recreation areas. As I write this, there is one in a drain outside my house.

In allowing this, our government, our city councils and the rental companies have condoned antisocial behaviour and urban disorder. And in the meantime, public places such as our coast, our parks, our footpaths and even our front yards, look like a teenager's bedroom.

I cannot abandon a hire-car on the lawn at Burleigh Heads beach and expect Avis to come and fetch it. And I cannot abandon a hire-car by leaving it parked on the footpath in the CBD. So why is this allowed with rental e-bikes and e-scooters?

The Solution:

Docking stations for rental e-bikes and e-scooters. If you don't return the rental to a docking station, you pay a substantial surcharge.