

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Submitter Comments:

I have over 20 years' experience in Infrastructure Planning and Delivery. The last 10 years of this has been working exclusively with Active Transport. I have prepared the following submission expressing some of my personal thoughts on Personal Mobility Devices. A lot of information exists in relation to PMD classifications, sizes, wattage, styles E-Scooter, E Bike etc. Unless you are in the industry and have interest in PMD or Active Transport the average user is highly unlikely to know the difference between an illegal and legal PMD. With the current legislation allowing legal use of PMD has opened the door for illegal PMD to exist. I think the first change that is needed is for E-bikes and E-Scooters to be classified differently and not grouped together under the "PMD" umbrella. With adequate legislation and enforcement, the safe use of E-Bikes is a solvable problem. If rules are enforced, it is possible E-Bikes can be used as substitute for a standard bike without a significant increase in accidents and injury. I believe that E-Bikes provide a health benefit, they can reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion and with the right legislation, enforcement could closely mirror current bicycle utilisation without significant increase in death and injury. However, E-Scooter on the other hand, I believe no amount of legislation, education, enforcement or infrastructure investment is going to reduce or resolve the currently safety issues to a satisfactory level. Some of the major issues faced currently with E- Scooters are: Design Legal or not, E-Scooters have small wheels and a high center of gravity which makes them inherently unstable. There is a large variance in wheel types which creates issues with surface friction and grip. They also have varying degrees acceleration and breaking power. The result is you have an unstable vehicle capable of high speeds that can be affected by the smallest amount of debris or minor changes in terrain. Which may be acceptable on designated cycleway in major urban locations, but these vehicles are permitted statewide on all footpaths and some roads. Which leads me to the second issue which is infrastructure. Infrastructure These vehicles are able to travel on all footpaths within Queensland. Local Governments are already struggling to inspect, maintain and upgrade existing footpath assets to an acceptable level of safety and accessibility for pedestrian, but there is now an additional user who requires a different level of service from these assets. In addition to this the other major issue is that driveways are not Local Government assets, so they will always vary in grade, surface type and condition. Just a minor vertical displacement between a footpath and driveway can cause significant issues for an E-Scooter rider which is often unnoticeable until it is too late. Majority of existing footpaths have very little separation from back of path to property boundary which when combined with varying types of property boundary fences, dwelling setbacks, and vegetation reduces visibility in both directions and creates a conflict between an E-Scooter traveling at speed and car exiting properties. You can be doing everything right yet still have issues staying on your E-Scooter. Rider Behavior The difference in rider's ability, risk tolerance, understanding of legislation and concern for enforcement combined with the ability for these vehicles to move between footpaths and road has created unpredictability in movement. This unpredictability is making it extremely difficult for motorists and pedestrians to see E-Scooters and react to their presence often resulting in collisions and near misses. Laws around age restrictions are obviously not working if you go to any school or footy oval after school you will see kids of all ages riding them in direct contradiction to existing rules (helmets, doubling etc) The popularity of E-Scooters amongst kids combined with a lack of road sense is a very dangerous combination. The amount of usage among young people can be a reflection on varying attitudes of parents, raging from being time poor, not understanding the laws around age restriction or not wanting to say no to their kids. But it is not just kids that are the problem with many adults also involved in accidents on E-Scooters. The current issues created around the use of PMD's is extremely complex and highly

unlikely to ever be solved through education, legislation, enforcement or financial investment in infrastructure. As part of the inquiry you will no doubt receive the submissions in support of them using examples of reduced congestion, health transport options, social equity and carbon reduction. You will also receive submission against referencing kids doubling, excessive speeds, rider behavior etc. These varying views, knowledge gaps and varying degrees of understanding are all contributing to the safety issues and serious incidents that are occurring through the use of PMD. At the end of day people are dying and thousands are being seriously injured. I would suggest no amount of reduction in congestion or carbon emissions is worth that. I understand there is also significant financial investment from hire providers who also require consideration but again I don't believe that should be at the expense of people's safety. My recommendation would be to separate E-Bikes from E-Scooters, legislate the E-Bikes and slowly introduce a ban on the E-Scooters.