

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Submission to the E-Mobility Safety and Use Inquiry - from the Pedestrian Amenity and Safety Sub-Committee of the Coolum Residents Association.

Our submission addresses safety, regulation, compliance and the responsibility of the three levels of government in the ownership and use of E-Bikes and E-Scooters.

We appreciate it is difficult to categorize and regulate all the numerous PMD variants, but decisive and firm regulation changes are very much needed to protect riders and pedestrians.

Summary:







Our major concern and that of most pedestrians in our region and elsewhere in the State, is the risk of being hit on footpaths, and severely injured by Heavy "Fat" E- Bikes, (some not even legal) and E-Scooters.

In short, the Heavy E-Bikes (over 30Kg) need to be classed as Motor Bikes, and controlled by rider licencing, and machine identification. Riders need to be over 16 years old. These Heavy E-Bikes should to be treated like Motor Bikes and restricted to roads only, at the present Max speed of 25Km/hr.

E-Scooters and Conventional E-Bikes (bikes under 30Kg) should be clearly identified and only ridden by riders over 16 years of age, these PMD's should be allowed to remain on pedestrian pathways, but at speed limits need to be clearly marked.

For E-Scooters and Conv E-Bikes an additional speed limit of 8km/hr should be introduced for busy and narrow pedestrian paths and boardwalks. The present limit of 12km/hr can remain for unseparated paths, and for the separated pathways and bike paths the Max speed as now 25Km/hr.

In some countries these E-Mobility Devices are not allowed at all, on pedestrian pathways, and in other countries the max speed is 6Km/hr.

 Mirage News Sunshine Coast Sees Weekly E-Scooter Injuries in Kids 4 hours ago	 Scimex On the Sunshine Coast, e-scooters put two children in hospital every week 4 hours ago	
 9News.com.au E-scooter accidents sending two children to one Queensland hospital every... 10 hours ago	 The Courier Mail Qld law that 'must change' as e-scooter kids dice with death 10 hours ago	

Safety:

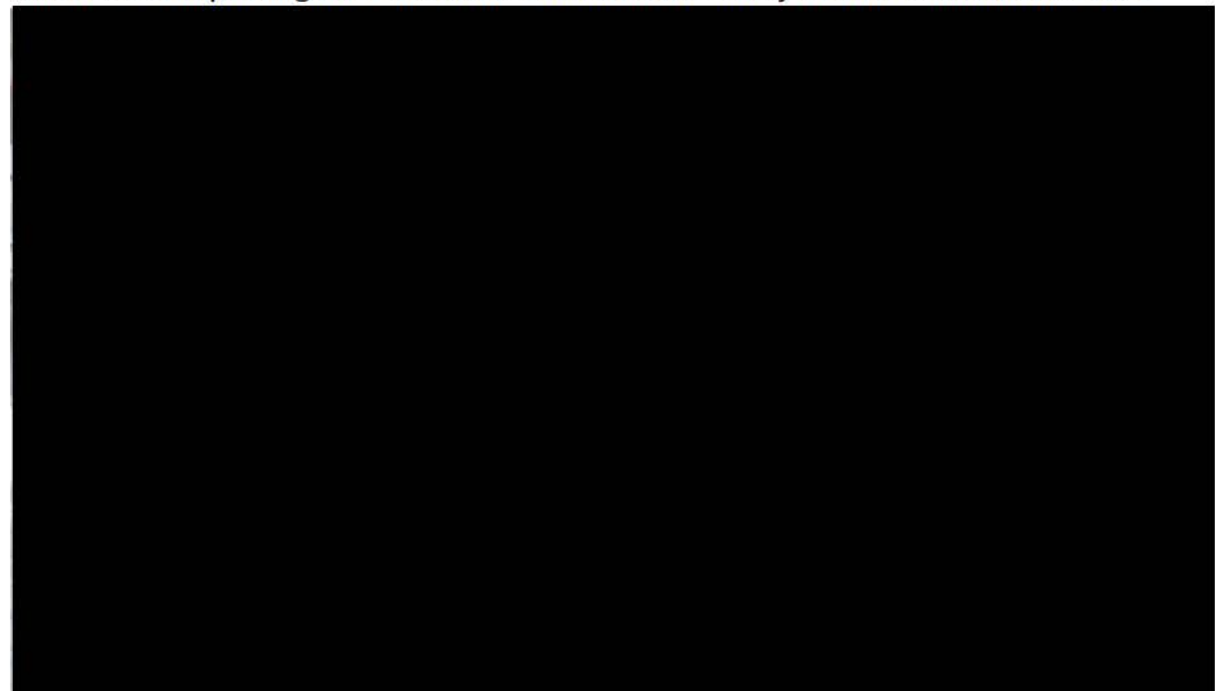
The well documented increase in injuries and deaths (112% rise in injuries for Qld between 2021 and 2024) to riders, passengers and pedestrians is proof that the present system of regulation and compliance is not working. A very recent Sunshine Coast study found that 180 teenagers and children required hospital treatment for e-mobility injuries in two years at the one hospital alone.

With 43% of Sunshine Coast footpaths 1.2metres or less wide, and 59% 1.8metres or less, (Sunshine Coast active transport plan 2011-2031) the footpaths were clearly never designed for the pedestrians plus the numerous PMD variants moving at vastly different speeds to pedestrians.

Heavy “Fat” E-Bikes, that are really, Motor Bikes, disguised as bicycles, to circumvent the law, are a very dangerous mix with pedestrians because of the bike’s weight up to 60Kg, quietness, acceleration, speed and momentum, especially in the hands of young, inexperienced riders.

Pedestrian safety needs a much higher priority on footpaths because they are by far the main users of the footpaths, and because they have no protection like helmets, from these fast-moving E-Bikes, (relative to pedestrian walking speed). Sadly, pedestrians have been hit and killed.

In short technology has got way ahead of infrastructure and regulations, and it will take decisive and firm changes to regulations and compliance to prevent more and more pedestrians and young riders being injured or becoming fatalities. There will be no easy, soft fixes to improving rider’s attitudes towards the safety of others and themselves.



Injuries from e-bikes have increased 60 per cent in the past year. EDWINA PICKLES

Changes to Regulations

As a minimum, identification of all E Mobility devices and rider age identification should be mandatory. These devices should have a rider 16-year minimum age limit. Teenagers from 15yrs or older can presently get a Photo Identification Card in Qld, so age identification is no real problem.

Firstly, regarding E-Bikes, as the weight and speed determine the impact damage, these bikes will need to be divide into two categories by weight. Power output is not a good way to classify or regulate these machines, just like cars, it is best done by licencing, speed and where these E-Machines best fit in the active transport mix.

Conventional E-Bikes up to 30Kg could be allowed on paths and roads, but the Heavy E-Bikes over 30Kg should only be allowed on roads.

Heavy E-Bikes, are Motorized Machines more akin to Mopeds or Conventional Motor Bikes, and they should be regulated the same way. These machines need to be clearly identified, the riders licenced and operated only on roads by over 16yr old riders, within the present max speed of 25Km/hr.

The adult supervision of over 12yr olds has been a farce, these young teenagers are far too young to be trying to handle powered machines at speed in traffic and amongst pedestrians.



E-bikes in Australia are supposed to be locked at a maximum motor-assisted speed of 25km/h but all it takes is an email to unlock some models. (Getty)

Compliance/ Enforcement

Firstly, as there are presently many Heavy “Fat” E-Bikes being used, that are not legal in relation to power output and operation, these bikes need to be made legal or permanently impounded.

There are State Government grants for monitoring cameras available at present, so these could help greatly with enforcement of speed limits and rider behaviour.

As now, fines for infringements, and then confiscation for serious offences.

For repeat offenders, who will obviously be bad car drivers with their poor attitude towards the safety of others - delay the age at which they can obtain a car driver’s licence.

Given that rental scooters and bikes can be controlled and monitored by a phone App, this could be a compliance method for the Transport Department and Police in the future.

Federal, State and Local Government Laws

The rapid uptake of Heavy “Fat” E- Bikes and E-Scooters without the infrastructure to accommodate them plus inadequate regulations has demonstrated the need for future mobility devices/machine to be assessed as to how they can safely fit into Australia’s transport system. **Also, machines that are clearly designed to circumvent federal regulations and aimed at the youth market need to be risk assessed on a society cost benefit basis.**

State traffic laws need to change to better accommodate all the different Types of Active Transport, this will inevitably mean slowing car speeds in built-up areas. Local Government will have to provide clear speed signage on footpaths and bikeways for pedestrians to feel safe and not avoid walking.

Qld footpaths need to be made safer now for residents and overseas visitors leading up to and during the 2032 Olympics. If visitors are told, or they feel that it is unsafe walking the footpaths of Queensland’s cities, parks and along our coastline, then that would be big negative for tourism and the Olympics.