

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Submitted by:	Brian Hurst
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1. Benefits of e-mobility (including both Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs), such as e-scooters and e-skateboards, as well as e-bikes) for Queensland;

E-scooters and e-bikes represent a significant technological advancement in personal transportation. The societal shift, public reaction, and governmental responses and laws surrounding their emergence are complex and multifaceted, reflecting the challenges faced when motor cars were introduced into a society accustomed to horse-drawn carriages. Early automobiles were viewed as dangerous due to their speed and the potential for accidents. People were genuinely concerned about the safety of the new technology and the potential for fatal accidents collisions.

E-mobility devices provide benefits such as enabling longer-distance travel with relatively minimal physical effort and at speeds quicker than bicycles. Users gain greater control over when and where they travel, rather than being restricted by a public transport timetable. These devices serve as a convenient and efficient mode of travel for short to medium distances.

It's vital to adopt distinct approaches when discussing privately owned e-scooters and e-bikes, as opposed to the hiring and sharing of these vehicles, due to their unique implications.

Ride-share e-scooters are little more than joy-riding exercises by individuals who are likely to disregard road and safety rules. Contrary to what is professed by local governments that sanction and financially benefit from their use, these hire scooters are not an active form of transport and are not taking cars off the roads.

The hire-e-scooters are a hazard to pedestrians in both their use of footpaths and the parking and abandonment of them on footpaths.

Privately owned e-scooters do not tend to block footpaths, but I do concede they are a hazard to pedestrians.

2. Safety issues associated with e-mobility use, including increasing crashes, injuries, fatalities, and community concerns;

The very nature of e-mobility equipment introduces safety concerns due to the interaction between devices and pedestrians on footpaths, as well as vehicles on the road. These conflicts

exist because e-scooters and their like were introduced before well-developed regulatory controls were in place.

Crashes are becoming increasingly likely due to inexperienced riders, interactions with pedestrians and road vehicles, unsafe behaviour, intoxication, and carelessness. Part of the issue is the way hire scooters were introduced into our cities without any controls or laws in place. What kind of public policy permits a level of government and a private operator to introduce a device onto streets and footpaths, imposing compliance costs and resource use, yet not directly contributing to the entities that must bear those costs?

That's the situation in Brisbane for e-scooter hire companies. While Brisbane City Council and other local authorities receive fees for each scooter and a share of the revenue, the state government must enforce the law and fund ambulance services.

But the most concerning part is that police, paramedics, and hospitals are left with nothing but a problem, which is a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

The local authorities that enter into contracts to allow the introduction of hire e-scooters and receive payments from e-scooter hire companies should be required to pay a fee per scooter to fund police compliance work and the emergency hospital costs associated with hire e-scooter crash injuries.

Banning e-scooters from footpaths may seem like a logical solution to protect pedestrians, but I believe further research is needed to determine if this is a practical and enforceable solution. A ban might be effective or necessary in highly populated, pedestrian-heavy areas; however, whether it is required on footpaths with fewer pedestrians is another matter.

A footpath in Mount Isa or any other suburban area differs from those in the inner city or South Bank Parklands. The ideal solution would involve separate pathways for bicycles and e-scooters, similar to what is common in Europe. Unfortunately, Australia lags behind Europe in this infrastructure, likely due to our vast distances and less developed bicycle culture.

3. Issues associated with e-mobility ownership, such as risk of fire, storage and disposal of lithium batteries used in e-mobility, and any consideration of mitigants or controls;

I have no expertise in this area.

4. Suitability of current regulatory frameworks for PMDs and ebikes, informed by approaches in Australia and internationally;

This new technology offers an opportunity to adopt a national approach and establish clear policies for e-mobility equipment. This could involve agreeing on a model set of laws for

enactment. Currently, legislation varies significantly across states and territories. A national approach would convey the urgency needed to implement management laws.

5. Effectiveness of current enforcement approaches and powers to address dangerous riding behaviours and the use of illegal devices;

The current approach to enforcement is hindered by a lack of awareness of existing laws among users. In the interest of improving safety, private e-scooter users may need to register their devices to signal that these e-mobility vehicles can be potentially unsafe for riders, pedestrians, and other road users. Consideration should be given to implementing a licensing system for riders to enhance safety and awareness of the issues. Additionally, further study of a minimum riding age may be necessary to control usage and improve safety.

6. Gaps between Commonwealth and Queensland laws that allow illegal devices to be imported and used;

No submission

7. Communication and education about device requirements, rules, and consequences for unsafe use; and

Laws must be enacted that require sellers to meet specific standards and provide buyers with clear and accurate information. Parents should take greater responsibility for purchasing e-scooters and e-bikes, ensuring their children comply with the existing laws. Although this is frequently mentioned, the risk of injuries from e-scooter crashes elevates this issue to a much higher priority.

8. Broad stakeholder perspectives, including from community members, road user groups, disability advocates, health and trauma experts, academia, the e-mobility industry, and all levels of government.