

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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The subject of what to do about e-bikes etc is currently in the front of many peoples minds given the rash of incidents involving e-bikes and sundry electrical powered scooters. It is clear from recent events that something needs to be done about this mode of transport as it is getting totally out of hand. Personally I have witnessed outrageous actions being undertaken by riders of these vehicles that if the same actions were being undertaken by a car driver then huge fines and loss of license would be the result. In the case of electric bikes very little seems to be happening. I have read of police crackdowns in different areas but while these are well and good more substantive action is required. But to do this requires a "full on" approach covering all aspects of the sale and use of these vehicles along with regulation regarding aftermarket modifications that are being done to these vehicles. The modifications being done are turning these vehicles into high powered non registered vehicles that are putting life and limb at risk of the user and other pedestrians and motorists. As I see it there are many areas that should be tackled in trying to get this problem under control. Some of my thoughts follow:

Education. There needs to be education within the school system of basic road rules with particular focus on these vehicles. Clearly riders of these vehicles have little to no understanding of basic road rules nor an understanding of reactions of licensed drivers nor the capabilities in terms of stopping or handling of the vehicles they are driving. There should be a competency test (run by the school) before being allowed on the road similar to what my granddaughter has just completed to be able to use her bicycle where she lives in the Netherlands.

Age Limit. There has to be an age limit and this could be similar to a motorcycle license situation whereby it goes by CC. In this case it could be KW with a top speed again by age. In any case no e bike or scooter should exceed 25kph. I suggest a minimum age of 14 for e bikes with a speed restriction of 15kph until they turn 16 then they can ride at 25kph. In addition proper safety gear must be worn and no doubling at any time as I have seen kids falling off etc.

Road Use. Limited road use should be the case. They should not be used on dual carriageways, freeways or roads that are designated "No E Bikes or Scooters permitted" This could be a local council rule with appropriate signage indicating such.

Compliance. This is the hard part but action needs to be undertaken to get this situation under control. Many people I talk to want them to be registered for road use. If they are capable of more than 25kph then yes they should be registered and if not then treated like an unregistered car and towed away. The other area of compliance is the aftermarket modifications being undertaken on these vehicles. You can simply check the Net and see lots of companies advertising various kits to modify an e bike. If you modify an e bike it should have the appropriate compliance plate the same as for a car. Failure to have a Mod Plate will result in seizure of the e bike.

Road Rules. If a rider of an e bike does not have drivers license then any rule that is broken the subsequent fine would become the responsibility of the parent/guardian including loss of demerit points. Maybe a few parents will start to control their kids once they start getting the fines. There are many other points that can be covered and no doubt this inquiry will unearth these.

As a final point, besides all the hooning etc I have seen being done by kids on e bikes one instance in particular stands out for me personally and goes back to basic understanding of road rules. I overtook a young boy around 14 on an e bike he was doing around 50kph in a 60kph zone and was on the edge of the road so far so good. But then I entered an operating school zone and slowed to 40kph and he passed me on the inside still doing 50kph. As I drive a large 4WD he would not be able to see children coming from the other side of the road along with the potential for kids to step out in front of him. They need a basic understanding of how to use the roads correctly.