

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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State Development, Works and Infrastructure Committee, Queensland Parliament

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I make the following comments and recommendations on topics 1 -5 and 8 of the Committee's inquiry ¹, as a resident of the Sunshine Coast, based on my observations as a pedestrian, a driver, a carer for a sight impaired person and as a person with qualifications in urban and regional planning.

1. Benefits of e-mobility devices including Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs), such as e-scooters and e-skateboards, as well as e-bikes for Queensland.

The benefits of PMDs are many, including:

- i. the fact that they are a low cost, cheap form of transport, powered by plug in electric charging which will become more important as petrol prices increase, and
- ii. they are a flexible form of transport and can travel on roads, cycle ways and paths to allow the rider to access shops, work, school etc. with minimal parking problems due to their relatively small size.

2. Safety issues

i. Rider safety.

The main issue that has been raised is rider safety, especially among young riders. A report from the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health published in June 2025 ^{2,3} has called for improved regulations after almost 180 young people under 16 required hospital treatment in the last two years on the Sunshine Coast. They found that 1 in 10 e-scooter injuries were life threatening or potentially life threatening. Lead author Dr Clanfield has called for the *minimum age of 16 to be imposed in Queensland* until safety measures are improved.

The report incident demographics indicate that the median age is 14, most are male, 42% had no helmet, 36% were travelling in excess of 25 kph and 37% suffered at least one fracture.

ii. **Pedestrian Safety**

Perth father, Trinh Phan, died after being hit from behind by an e-scooter in Perth in May 2025 ⁴. The Western Australian Government has announced an inquiry into safety issues, stating that there have been four e-scooter fatalities so far in the State this year. The inquiry is due to report in September.

Safety is a major issue for pedestrians, especially the elderly, the hearing impaired, the sight impaired and for families with young children. PMDs are generally electric, silent, fast moving and cannot necessarily stop quickly to avoid collisions. Any unpredictable pedestrian movement can cause a collision, compounded by the fact that few riders warn pedestrians of their approach, do not keep left, approach and disappear at speed, and do not obey signage preventing them accessing boardwalks, paths, shopping esplanades, trails, beaches and so on.

iii. **Motor Vehicle Driver safety**

As a driver, I am constantly appalled by the dangerous, risk-taking driving of PMDs, particularly e-scooters, e-bikes, e-skateboards and e-unicycles on our roads. It is not uncommon to observe three young children riding an e-scooter, with no helmets, e-scooters being driven with two or more passengers and fast travelling e-unicycles and e-scooters weaving in and out of traffic. In most instances the riders are not wearing helmets. What are the consequences of a crash for a driver? It is devastating that a rider can be seriously injured by a car, but what about the years of grief for the driver, who cannot stop in time as a e-scooter dashes in front of a car?

3. Safety issues associated with ownership

- i. There have been numerous reports of house fires being caused by lithium batteries ⁵ , and
- ii. A growing number of German cities have banned the use of e-scooters on public transport citing the risk of fire and explosion ⁶.

4. Suitability of current regulatory frameworks for PMDs and e-bikes

- i. The current guidelines state that the minimum age for riding a PMD is 16 or 12 -15 if supervised by an adult ⁷
- ii. The data from Dr Clanfield's study indicates that the median age of those with e-scooter incidents is 14. He has called for the minimum age to be raised to 16 immediately. I support this. I do not see how it is possible for an adult to adequately supervise a child on a fast moving PMD.
- iii. This brings up the issue of **speed**. In Germany and Denmark ⁶ e-scooters that can go faster than 20kph are not permitted. In Finland and France the maximum speed the vehicle can reach is 25 kph and in Finland the motor must not exceed 1000 watts. In Sweden the maximum speed is 20kph and the motor power must not exceed 250 watts.
- iv. German regulations are outlined in "*Regulation on the participation of small electric vehicles in road traffic*." ⁸These provide guidelines on speed (not less than 6 kph and not more than 20 kph), dimensions and mass, need for a valid insurance sticker, a vehicle identification number, a manufacturers plate outlining specifications and an operating permit. They also cover the need for two independent brakes, lighting requirements, a loud bell, batteries to comply with safety requirements etc.
- v. Where are PMDs permitted? In France and Germany, ⁶ electric scooters can ride on cycle ways or on the road. In France, if towns allow travelling on pedestrian paths, the maximum speed is 6 kph, walking speed. In Finland, Sweden, riding on pavements is not

permitted. In Spain riding on pavements, in pedestrian areas, at crossroads, on motorways, expressways, trunk roads and in city tunnels is not permitted. The UK⁹ bans “powered transporters” from all spaces except private land, although they have begun a trial of hired e-scooters. Powered transporters fall within the legal definition of “motor vehicle”.

- vi. Regulation of alcohol use needs to be clarified. If it is the same as for motor vehicles, the levels and fines need to be listed.

5. Effectiveness of current enforcement approaches

- i. The Queensland Government’s rules for PMDs ⁷ do cover the basic requirements for the behavior expected of PMD users, such as the need for a helmet, no use of mobile phones, not carrying passengers. However the police cannot be everywhere, and the PMDs are everywhere.
- ii. It would be better for changes to occur at the point of sale, like the German regulations, so that PMDs are speed limited, regulated, licensed and permits issued so that they comply with safety requirements. Sellers would need to comply and educate buyers on the rules of operation. A license should be mandatory, gained after passing a test, similar to drivers licenses.
- iii. Signage needs to be improved, and a new graphic developed so that it is clear where motorized mobility devices are prohibited. I have heard of the notion of geofencing areas which sounds promising.
- iv. Enforcement of rules for PMDs is clearly difficult as there are so many of them, many in out of the way places. Targeting specific behaviour and timeframes might be more effective. It is common to see reckless PMD driver behavior, possibly due to alcohol and drug use, particularly during the evening. When the Sunshine Coast Council e-scooter trials were in place, scooters were parked randomly throughout suburbs overnight, and it was well known that e-scooters were regarded as a way to get around breath testing laws.

6. Stakeholder perspective

- i. Older residents need leisure opportunities to walk along pathways where they are not afraid of injury from PMDs. Currently the regulations and guidelines do not sufficiently protect pedestrians. It is unclear where PMDs are permitted. I have encountered e-bicycles with fat tires on the beach and e-cycles on the narrow Alexandra Headland rainforest path, and on paths surrounding the library and shops. In Germany, ⁸ insurance is mandatory. It needs to be introduced here, as well as speed limits for PMDs. The current guidelines of 12 kpm on footpaths and shared paths is too fast. Walking speed of 6 kph would be safer, as per the European examples.⁶
- ii. Families with young children need places to walk and run, where they are not at risk of injury. Little children are unpredictable and running into the path of a speeding PMD could be disastrous.
- iii. Sight impaired people are vulnerable when PMDs are travelling at speed and do not give way to pedestrians. In fact, most PMD users assume they have the right of way, due to their speed and size.
- iv. Hearing impaired people are at risk, as the PMDs are silent.

7. Recommendations:

- i. Immediately make it mandatory that riders of PMDs must be 16 or over. This is urgently required to not only protect our children, but to also protect drivers and pedestrians from trauma.
- ii. Ban PMDs from public reserves, pathways, beaches, esplanades, shopping centre pathways, malls, trails, built up areas and places where pedestrians should expect to enjoy the freedom of walking without fear, especially along coastal paths and boardwalks. PMDs should be considered primarily as a form of transport and riders should be encouraged to use cycle paths.
- iii. Introduce regulations for alcohol limits and severe fines for all rules breaches, including for parents who allow under sixteen year old children to use PMDs.

- iv. Develop regulations which restrict the speed of PMDs on footpaths and shared paths, where permitted, to 6 kpm (walking speed) as per European countries ⁶.
- v. Develop regulations which limit the speed of PMDs at the point of sale to 25 kph, require an approved training course and test before issuing licenses for riders, and require that the vehicle is insured, has an approved manufacturers plate and a vehicle identification number for registration purposes. The regulations should cover the need for two independent brakes, front and rear lighting requirements, a loud bell and batteries to comply with safety requirements etc. Germany ⁶ intends to introduce the requirement for indicators, as it is deemed unsafe to use hand signals.
- vi. Develop separate regulations for e-bicycles which have pedals and treat these vehicles the same as ordinary person-powered bicycles i.e. not requiring registration, as per the UK guidance for Electrically assisted pedal cycle (EAPC) ⁹, provided the rider is 14 or older.

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