

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Parliamentary Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

Fraser Coast Regional Council submission:

Advocacy to establish the Registration and Regulation of Private e-mobility Devices in Queensland

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Executive Summary

The Queensland State Government has announced a Parliamentary Inquiry into (Personal Mobility Devices - PMDs) e-mobility safety and use in Queensland.

“There has been a 112% rise from 2021 to 2024 in injuries to PMD riders, passengers and pedestrians” “...Parliamentary Inquiry to ensure we are doing everything we can to boost safety for both pedestrians and riders” – Minister for Transport and Main Roads – the Honourable Brent Mickelberg.

The rapid rise in the use of PMDs or e-mobility devices including e-scooters e-bikes, e-skateboards and e-unicycles in urban areas, has brought an increase in crashes resulting in serious injuries and fatalities, creating growing concern about PMD safety. While private e-mobility devices provide a convenient, eco-friendly, and affordable mode of travel, their unregulated use poses increasing risks to both riders and the general public. While the inquiry covers e-mobility, this document focuses on e-scooters for the Fraser Coast Region as the most common e-mobility device and advocates for registration, mandatory 3rd party insurance, adherence to road rules, and the need for medical and insurance data to be collected in the event of accidents or injuries.

The goal of this advocacy is to encourage governments and policymakers to create a legal framework that ensures the safe use of private e-mobility devices while minimising risks to users and third parties.

1. Introduction

In recent years, e-mobility has gained significant popularity, especially in metropolitan areas, as a quick and affordable transportation option. However, there is growing

concern about their safety, lack of regulation, and their potential impact on public health and safety.

While this document considers all e-mobility devices, the current available research, data and main concerns for the Fraser Coast Region relate specifically to e-scooters. Currently there are low numbers of other devices present on the road network, Council is aware of the growth of these devices in metropolitan and other regions and consider by extension that the proposed recommendations from this report apply to all e-mobility devices.

2. Background

- **Fraser Coast Region - Local Context**

The unsafe operation of private PMDs on footpaths, shared paths and open roads, this has been a regular topic at the Fraser Coast Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings with membership including Queensland Police Services (QPS) and Transport and Main Roads (TMR). Riders are observed speeding, not wearing a helmet, underage (<16) not obeying road rules, riding double and riding on prohibited roads on a daily basis.

TMRs Crash Analytics Reporting System (CARS) only began reporting of PMD crashes in late 2022. In 2023 there were **eleven (11) reported crashes** involving PMDs (Refer to **Attachment 1**), with **seven (7) of these resulting in hospitalisation**. It must be stressed that these are the reported incidents, many crashes involve riders falling off and are not reported.

- **National Context**

While private e-scooters are a promising alternative to other forms of transportation, the rise in accidents, hospital admissions, and instances of road rule violations indicates the need for stricter regulation. Latest figures compiled by the Jamieson Trauma Institute¹ have shown a doubling of e-scooter injuries every two years. A recent Channel Seven News report² refers to research from the University of Melbourne, which indicated that there have been 30 deaths recorded in the last 5 years and that 1 in three e-scooter deaths in Australia are children. Most worryingly, 15 of these deaths have occurred in Queensland. It is for this reason that Council strongly advocates for the registration of private PMDs and the introduction of regulations requiring third-party insurance, adherence to traffic laws, and proper tracking of accident-related data.

3. 2050 Vision Zero³

Australian governments have committed to the National Road Safety Strategy with a vision of zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2050 (Vision Zero).

Vision Zero is a principle that no one should be killed or seriously injured using our road networks. Its adoption is a commitment to a forgiving road transport system.

‘People make mistakes. A mistake should not cost anyone’s life or health’

The Safe System approach involves all elements of the road transport system working together to prevent crashes or limit crash forces, making them survivable and reducing the severity of injury. These elements include roads and roadsides, vehicle and vehicle mix, road users, speed function of the road and planning. This is a proactive improvement of roads and vehicles, so the entire system is made safe, rather than just locations or situations where crashes occurred in the past.

The unregulated introduction of e-mobility devices and the rising crash rate is contrary to this vision and may reverse the trend to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on our roads.

4. Hospital Admissions and Public Health Concerns PMDs

The unregulated use of PMDs has resulted in an alarming increase in hospital admissions due to accidents involving riders, pedestrians, and other road users. E-scooters place the rider in a standing position which creates a high centre of gravity and combined with small wheels result in a greater chance of riders being thrown from the scooter compared to other wheeled devices. Common injuries from e-scooter accidents range from abrasions, fractured/broken bones, facial injuries through to spinal and head/brain trauma.

Key Issues:

- **Rising Hospital Admissions:** Data from hospitals have shown a clear increase in injuries related to PMD use, with a particularly concerning rise in head and spinal injuries, with many riders not wearing helmets. Fractures are very common injuries followed by open wounds, sprains and strains. According to recent studies, hospital admissions for e-scooter accidents have doubled over the last two years with an over representation of drink driver and drug driver related crashes⁴. Another alarming statistic is the number of children and teens being admitted to Hospital⁵. Research reveals that there were 176 e-scooter

injuries in children and teens admitted to just the Sunshine Coast Hospital in 2023 and 2024.

- **Tracking of PMD related crashes:** notwithstanding the above studies many PMD crashes are recorded as pedestrian or other wheeled device incidents, this makes it difficult to report the true extent of crashes involving PMDs. Discussion with the Hervey Bay Hospital Trauma team have verified that they do not specify e-scooters as part of the admission process. As mentioned previously CARS only started collecting crash statistics in late 2022 for PMDs for reported crashes.
- **Emergency Response:** The lack of standardized data on PMD-related incidents makes it difficult for hospitals to prepare for and manage such emergencies effectively.
- **Public Health Crisis:** The growing number of hospital admissions not only strains healthcare resources but also poses a serious public health risk.

Recommendation: By registering PMDs, authorities can track incidents more effectively, ensure that riders have access to basic safety measures (like helmets), and provide data that helps in managing healthcare services.

5. Breaking of Road Rules

Private e-mobility riders frequently disregard road rules, such as speeding on roads and footpaths, running red lights, and ignoring most other road rules, particularly in regional centres. This non-compliance with traffic regulations increases the likelihood of accidents and undermines the safety for other road users.

Key Issues:

- **Speeding:** Many PMDs are capable of speeds that far exceed the legal limits set for certain urban areas. When riders exceed the speed limit, the risk of serious and fatal injury increases. As it is legal to ride on footpaths in Australia, speed limits in Queensland are 12km/hr on footpaths and shared paths unless otherwise signed and 25km/hr on bike paths and roads. PMDs are prohibited on roads with speed limits greater than 50km/hr. Few private PMD riders have been observed abide by these rules.
- **Ignoring Road Rules:** PMD riders are often seen ignoring many common road rules, these include; not wearing helmets, doubling (two riders per scooter), drink driving/drug driving, unsupervised underage (less than 16), using mobile phones, riding on the wrong side of the road, weaving through traffic and creating hazards for pedestrians, especially in crowded or busy urban environments.

- **Failure to Yield to Traffic:** The failure to stop at red lights or yield to other road users can lead to collisions, injuries, and fatalities. This can also lead to other road users having to take evasive action causing separate crashes. This is most concerning with regards to younger riders, as they will be the next generation of Learner and Provisional drivers.
- **Low Enforcement Action:** Currently there are many reasons there is low enforcement action with regards to PMDs. PMD riders are mobile, they can easily evade static and mobile interception points, under-age riders may legally require an adult or guardian present as well as strains on an already stretched police force that has limited resources for targeted enforcement.

Recommendation: Most PMD crashes are avoidable, riders are not following the speed limits or wearing their helmet. Private PMD registration would include riders being educated on road rules, with penalties for non-compliance. Strict enforcement would help prevent these violations and improve road safety.

6. Third-Party Insurance for PMD Riders

Currently, private PMD riders are not required to have third-party insurance. This leaves victims of accidents, such as pedestrians or other drivers, without adequate financial protection for injuries or damages caused by a PMD rider.

Key Issues:

- **Liability for Injuries:** In the event of an accident involving a PMD, it is often unclear who is liable for injuries sustained by pedestrians or other road users. The lack of mandatory third-party insurance further complicates legal claims.
- **Financial Burden:** Medical bills, damages to property, and other expenses resulting from accidents could lead to significant financial strain on both victims and the PMD rider.
- **Lack of Accountability:** Riders who cause accidents often lack sufficient insurance to cover medical bills or property damage, which leaves victims without proper compensation.

Recommendation: By requiring private PMD riders to have mandatory third-party insurance, accidents involving PMD will have clearer liability structures. Third-party insurance ensures that victims are compensated for damages, while also holding riders accountable for their actions.

7. Proposed Solutions

In response to the issues, the following solutions are proposed:

7.1. PMD Registration and Regulation

- PMDs should be registered with the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) in line with most other powered wheeled devices. Registration will provide a framework to ensure compliance with safety regulations.
- Control of the importation of PMDs with speed limiters built into the device, alternatively all PMDs should be speed limited similar to the geofencing applied to e-scooter hire companies.
- Individual identification for each PMD (number plate or similar)
- Registration also facilitates tracking of PMD accidents and enables authorities to identify repeat offenders.
- Consideration of low powered (and speed limited to 12km/hr) PMDs suitable for children under 16 that would be exempt from registration.

7.2. Mandatory Third-Party Insurance

- All PMD riders should be required to carry third-party insurance. This will protect pedestrians, other cyclists, and drivers from financial loss in the event of an accident.
- Insurance premiums should be based on usage, with higher premiums for more frequent or riskier usage.

7.3. Road Safety Education

- Riders should be required to take a brief online or in-person road safety course before registering their PMD. This would include education on road rules, helmet use, and accident prevention. Given that PMD riders should be 16 years or older this could easily align with the existing Learner and Provision driver programs.
- Penalties should be imposed for riders who fail to adhere to traffic regulations or who ride PMDs without proper safety gear.

7.4. Data Collection and Accident Reporting

- A standardized incident reporting system should be developed to track PMD accidents. This would provide valuable data for future regulation and improve response efforts in the event of accidents.
- Hospitals and emergency services should be required to report PMD accidents in a central database for improved public health monitoring.

7.5. Repeat Offenders

- PMDs should be included within the current anti hooning legislation, (part of the *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000*) which allows police to impound or immobilize vehicles involved in hooning with potential for forfeiture after repeated offences to deter dangerous activities. This includes the expanded laws in 2023 that include organizing, promoting, filming or photographing hooning events.
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7. Conclusion

Private PMDs offer tremendous potential as a sustainable and convenient mode of transport, but their unregulated use poses significant risks to public health and safety. By advocating for private PMD registration, mandatory third-party insurance, and the collection of accident data, we can ensure safer and more responsible usage.

These steps are necessary to create a legal framework that supports safe PMD usage, protects public health, and holds riders accountable for their actions. We urge policymakers to take swift action to regulate PMD use and implement these essential safeguards for public safety.

8. Call to Action

Council calls on the State and the National governments to:

- Implement PMD registration requirements,
- Control the importation of PMDs
- Mandate third-party insurance for all PMD riders, and
- Improve road safety education for PMDs
- Develop and enforce regulations to ensure road safety.

Together, we can create safer communities and ensure that PMDs are used responsibly and in compliance with the law.

References

¹ Jamieson Trauma Institute – www.metronorth.health.qld.gov.au/jamieson-trauma-institute

² Channel Seven News Report <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woqYMEqsoV0>

³ Vision Zero and the Safe System - National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 –
www.roadsafety.gov.au/nrss

⁴ Epidemiology of injured e-scooter riders at a major trauma service, the who, what
where and when - <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ans.70017>

⁵ ABC NEWS Report E-scooter injuries at Sunshine Coast Hospital triggers call for ban
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-06-04/escooter-injuries-report-sunshine-coast-university-hospital/105373918>

Attachment 1 – PMD Crashes Hervey Bay to the end of 2023

