

## **Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland**

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## SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO E-MOBILITY SAFETY AND USE IN QUEENSLAND

Submitted by: Kathryn Buder

My submission mainly deals with:

- *Safety issues associated with e-mobility use, including increasing crashes, injuries, fatalities, and community concerns;*
- *Effectiveness of current enforcement approaches and powers to address dangerous riding behaviours and the use of illegal devices;*
- *Communication and education about device requirements, rules, and consequences for unsafe use.*

Main points of my submission:

1. Few people are aware of the current laws governing the use of Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs) in Queensland.
2. The laws need to be better publicised.
3. The laws need to be enforced.
4. Fines need to reflect the gravity of the offence.
5. E-motorbikes need to be registered and ridden by licensed users.
6. Illegally modified PMDs need to be confiscated by the police and/or courts.
7. More dedicated cycle paths and lanes are required if these PMDs are to be allowed in our communities.

Some of the problems:

The number of e-motorbikes, mopeds and modified e-scooters being ridden illegally on our paths and roads is truly alarming. I cannot leave my home on foot, by bicycle or in a car without seeing multiple illegal actions by PMD riders who put pedestrians, themselves and other road users at considerable risk of serious injury or death, yet they seem to do so with impunity.

The number of personal mobility devices, both legal and illegal, has increased exponentially with little regulation and enforcement of laws.

On Karawatha Drive and surrounding streets in Mountain Creek, I regularly see children riding e-motorbikes dangerously fast on the footpaths and the road, doing wheelies and taunting drivers.

The footpath should be a place of safety for pedestrians, but this is no longer the case. Older people, in particular, are fearful of being hit at speed and sustaining significant injuries.

Friends visiting from Victoria last year asked me why Queensland didn't have a law requiring bike and scooter users to wear a helmet. They were very surprised when I told them that this law had been in place for many years as they had not noticed anyone wearing a helmet in the week they had observed people passing on the path beside their van site at the Maroochydore Beach Holiday Park.

According to The Courier Mail, the penalty for not wearing a helmet on an e-scooter is \$161. That is a mere 13% of the seatbelt fine (\$1209 + 4 demerit points) for what is essentially the same failure to take responsibility for your personal safety.

In December 2024, a Sunshine Beach man was fined with two separate penalties of \$258 each for repeatedly allowing his teenage sons to ride their unregistered e-motorbikes on the road. One boy was 15 and the father was initially given a warning. Underage, unregistered and acting deliberately, yet the father was warned and each fine was less than one quarter of that for not wearing a seatbelt. And the simple fact is that this case was newsworthy simply because so few of these fines have been given.

The people using PMDs so dangerously and illegally have the potential of causing serious and possibly fatal accidents involving multiple road users.

The situation has been allowed to escalate to the point where it is totally out of control. I believe that the majority of parents are completely unaware of the laws governing the use of PMDs as I would like to think that most parents would not knowingly allow their children to break the law.

Very few people seem to be aware that PMDs are legally limited to 25kph and that e-scooters are not allowed at all on roads where the speed limit is greater than 50kph. They do not realise that it's illegal for children under 13 to ride an e-scooter and that from the ages of 13 to 16 they must be accompanied by an adult on their own scooter as doubling is illegal. They don't know that PMDs capable of travelling at speeds greater than 25kph are actually e-motorbikes and must be registered. As I heard a police officer say on the radio, "an electric car is still a car and an e-motorbike is still a motorbike."

#### Suggested solutions:

1. Publicise the existing laws on television, radio, billboards, print and social media. Get the message out there so that parents know if their children are breaking the law.
2. Enforce the existing laws. This will be difficult, I know, but teams of police on e-bikes and/or e-motorbikes, blitzes at school gates and roadblocks on bike paths would go a long way to stemming the problem. Use CCTV or drone technology to identify where the dangerous riders live and visit them at home.
3. Employ recognised behaviour modification strategies to enforce the laws – go hard for a few months then ease off, blitz again for a week or two and then move to random enforcement. If the problem still exists, start again with another concentrated campaign.
4. Increase the current fines to reflect the severity of the offences.
5. Apply the fines to the parents if a child is the rider.
6. Confiscate illegally modified PMDs with no option for the owner to reclaim them.
7. Require all e-motorbikes to be registered, only ridden on the road and only by licensed users.
8. Work with councils to develop more bike paths and cycle lanes so that pedestrian safety is seen to be a priority.

The government must move now to limit the illegal use of e-motorbikes, mopeds and modified scooters for the safety of all path and road users.