Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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CITY OF GOLDCOAST.

Mr James McDonald
Chair, State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee

Parliament House
Cnr George and Alice Streets
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir,

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

The City of Gold Coast (the City) welcomes the Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland and is pleased to provide a submission in response to the terms of reference. It is recognised that there are significant opportunities to reduce injuries associated with e-mobility in Queensland and a collaborative approach across Commonwealth, Queensland and Local Government is required to develop safer outcomes.

As part of the Inquiry, I extend an invitation to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee to meet with City officers and observe e-mobility activity on the Gold Coast transport network to understand and appreciate the challenges currently faced.

Please find attached a response to each of the eight terms of reference which has been structured as follows:

- **Primary concerns** relating to terms of reference 4, 5 and 6 where reviews of current e-mobility legislation at the Commonwealth and State level are required. Specifically in relation to the importation and enforcement of e-mobility devices.
- **Secondary concerns** relate to terms of reference 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8 where the City has a strategic view on e-mobility within its transport system.

Please contact [redacted] or via email [redacted] should you wish to discuss this submission further.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

[redacted]
Council of the City of Gold Coast

Primary concerns

(4) Suitability of current regulatory frameworks for PMDs and e-bikes, informed by approaches in Australia and internationally

Background

The use of privately owned e-bikes and personal mobility devices (PMDs) has grown rapidly on the Gold Coast. The current regulatory frameworks across State and Local Governments are not adequately equipped to manage their impacts. The inundation of non-compliant devices on the City's active travel and road networks have produced significant challenges in enforcing device compliance, speed offences and poor behaviours among device users regarding safety and attitude towards other path or road users. These frameworks are fragmented, lack clarity and amended enforcement mechanisms are needed to ensure safe and lawful use.

The regulatory framework also struggles to address offences committed by minors, riding e-bikes and PMDs. Officers cannot compel minors to provide identification and pursuing unpaid fines is difficult under the Y*outh Justice Act 1992*.

Identified issues

- Weak enforcement powers:
    - Powers of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to address offences under *Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995* (TORUM) are too weak, in particular where PMD offence (prohibited by sign) is not an infringeable offence under *State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2014* (SPER).
    - Local government powers (City) to regulate offences are weak and rely on authorised persons powers under a Local Law that is not written to capture PMD related offences.
    - QPS powers under TORUM need to be strengthened to allow officers to enforce a broader range of 'safety and behaviour' related offences, other than speed.
- Challenges with minors:
    - PMD and e-bike riders are often minors – City authorised persons are limited in regulating minors which is called up by the *Youth Justice Act 1992* (for fines, prosecution).
- Local Law limitations:
    - City's authorised officers cannot issue infringement notices under TORUM for e-bike or PMD violations (e.g. improper use on shared paths).
    - E-bike and PMD prohibited areas are not legally defined (e.g. as "council property" or "park").
    - The prohibited conduct (use of a PMD) is not specified in the City's Local Law and relies on evidentiary onus in establishing the interference with 'ordinary and reasonable use and enjoyment of other path / road users'.

  - Available prohibition signs do not comply with the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) or are not approved by the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) as a non-standard sign.

- Jurisdictional constraints:
  - City's authorised persons have no regulatory power on State controlled roads or transport corridors unless authorised in writing by DTMR.
  - Similar enforcement constraints exist under State laws in NSW and Victoria, where police handle TORUM equivalent offences.
  - Brisbane City Council has strengthened its Local Law provisions to define areas and prescribe specific PMD related offences, which are enforceable by authorised persons.
- City response to current state of regulatory framework to encourage safer behaviours and road user awareness:
  - Introduction of engineering treatments to active travel networks.
  - Development of communication and educational material to distribute and engage with the community.

Suggested areas of investigation

- Reform State legislation and guidance in relation to active travel and e-mobility:
  - Define active travel and e-mobility distinctly.
  - Define suitable infrastructure for both active travel and e-mobility.
  - Allow local governments to sign the default speed limit for PMDs on Pathways to improve compliance and awareness with the default speed limit.
  - Apply consistent rules for e-bikes and PMDs, particularly in relation to speed limits and minimum age.
  - Reassess the appropriateness of the minimum age for the use of legal PMDs and e-bikes.
- Local Law enhancement:
  - Investigate provisions for local governments to prohibit e-mobility on specific parts of their on-road and off-road infrastructure.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities:
  - Appropriately define roles for State and local governments to enforce e-mobility effectively.

Conclusion

The current regulatory frameworks for e-bikes and PMDs are inadequate and inconsistent. A coordinated, multi-level reform is needed to define responsibilities, strengthen enforcement and ensure infrastructure and technology are aligned with the safer use of e-mobility devices.

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

Background

The current enforcement framework for e-bikes and PMDs in Queensland is fragmented and largely ineffective. TORUM lacks clear definitions of what constitutes a legal or illegal device and enforcement is further hindered by the limited powers of local government. The City's Local laws are not designed to address the unique challenges posed by these devices, relying heavily on subjective interpretations by authorised officers. City officers cannot issue infringement notices specifically for e-bike and PMD related offences. Additionally, e-bike and PMD users are not required to carry licenses or register their devices, making it hard to trace offenders. Surveillance tools like CCTV help monitor activity but are ineffective without identifiable information.

Differences between Queensland and New South Wales Road Rules for e-mobility also cause confusion and misunderstanding within the Gold Coast community. Residents and visitors within suburbs near the Queensland and New South Wales border are relatively unaware of these Road Rule differences. As a result the Gold Coast e-mobility working group has developed communication and education initiatives with Tweed Shire Council, to advise the community of the differences in e-bike and PMD rules between Queensland and New South Wales.

Identified issues

- Legal and jurisdictional gaps between TORUM and Local Laws:
    - City Local Laws do not define non-compliant e-mobility devices relying instead on TORUM.
    - City officers lack authority to enforce TORUM or issue infringement notices under SPER.
    - City Local Laws rely on subjective interpretation (e.g. "interference with a road"), making enforcement inconsistent and difficult.
- Enforcement limitations:
    - PMD users are not required to carry identification, registration or licences.
    - City Local Law officers cannot lawfully restrict e-mobility devices accessing roads or footpaths.

Suggested areas of investigation

- Review TORUM to include:
    - A requirement that e-bikes and PMD's that are to be used outside of a private property (public place) require a registration or permit of some kind, to assist in establishing a responsible person and enable the ability to take action where the user is not complying with relevant conditions.

- Specific regulation around e-bike and PMD use and prescribe offences that relate specifically to speed on a footpath and on a road so that QPS are more easily able to regulate these offences.

- Offences where impact of e-bike and PMD use on members of the public can be prescribed and calls up the *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000* where the PMD user causes 'anxiety or issue to another person', in a similar way to public nuisance.

- Prescription of particular areas (parks or areas within a park), council property and within bathing reserves that prescribes the activity of 'use of a motored, or electric vehicle, including e-bikes, e-scooter and other e-powered devices are prohibited, so that officers can more easily enforce.

- Buy back initiatives and incentives for non-compliant e-bikes and e-scooters.

- Enforcement tools with focus on technology:

  - Investigate automated enforcement technologies (e.g. number plate recognition).

  - Investigate registration systems to link e-mobility devices to owners.

  - Investigate CCTV and smart surveillance for use on by local government to identify and report e-mobility offences to QPS.

Conclusion

The current enforcement approaches and powers are ineffective in addressing high risk e-mobility use and illegal devices. Local laws are insufficient, enforcement powers are limited and operational challenges persist. A coordinated approach involving legislative reform, technological support and shared responsibilities is essential to improve safety and compliance in the use of e-mobility devices.

(6) Gaps between Commonwealth and Queensland laws that allow illegal devices to be imported and used

Background

Current Commonwealth standards, rules and enforcement processes for vehicle importation has enabled the import and sale noncompliant e-mobility devices to the Australian market. Within the Gold Coast this has led to an influx and rapid growth of noncompliant devices on its transport network leading to significant safety concerns expressed by residents and visitors and demonstrated by the rise of hospital admissions resulting crashes where e-mobility devices are involved and reported PMD crashes. To respond to the safety concerns the City has implemented treatments on its path networks and implemented several communication and education initiatives for the community advocating for safer outcomes. The City's Local Laws are ineffective to enforce noncompliant or illegal devices and QPS efforts in enforcement are acknowledged and appreciated. The City advocates for a reform of the importation and enforcement processes for e-mobility devices.

Identified issues

- Unregulated importation and sale:

  - Devices that do not meet Australian Design Rules or the European Standard EN15194 are entering the market and being used illegally within public spaces.

- Current importation and enforcement processes for e-bikes and PMDs require reform.

- City's Local Laws:
  - Current City Local Laws are insufficient to define or enforce what constitutes a "legal device".
  - Enforcement relies on TORUM, which does not empower City officers to act on noncompliant devices.

Suggested areas of investigation

- The City supports the Inquiry to advocate for:
  - A reform of Commonwealth legislation related to the importation and enforcement processes for e-mobility devices.
  - A review of National importation standards where Commonwealth level importation requirements for e-bikes and PMDs and mandate compliance with EN15194 or equivalent Australian standards prior to sale.
  - Buy back initiatives and incentives for non-compliant e-mobility devices.
  - E-mobility device certification and labelling where all imported devices are to carry visible certification labels indicating compliance and a national registry of approved e-mobility devices.
  - Public education and retailer accountability where a national awareness campaign on legal device requirements mis developed and retailers accountable for selling only compliant devices.

Conclusion

The City supports the Inquiry advocating for importation reform at Commonwealth Government level for e-mobility devices. It is envisaged that stronger Commonwealth legislation in this area can contribute to a higher presence of compliant e-mobility devices on its network.

Secondary concerns

(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.

Background

The City of Gold Coast has integrated active travel into its broader strategic planning for its transport network and has a third party e-bike share scheme currently in operation. Privately owned e-mobility devices have provided new opportunities for residents and visitors but have introduced safety and amenity issues that need to be addressed by the Inquiry.

Identified benefits

- E-mobility devices have the capability of enabling seamless first and last mile connectivity within public transport routes. At present e-mobility devices are not permitted on the G:link light rail. Allowing devices

to be carried on the G:link light rail would enable seamless first and last mile connectivity and compliment Queensland Rail routes.

- High density areas with limited parking benefit from e-mobility, but guidelines on infrastructure to support safe use and parking and storage rules require improved guidance from the State.
- E-mobility offers an accessible and equitable transport option for people without a driver's licence and adults who face physical barriers to walking or cycling.
- E-mobility provides a low cost alternative to car ownership for those experiencing cost of living pressures.
- Individuals with higher disposable incomes have realised e-mobility as an alternative transport mode for minors traveling to and from school and extra-curricular activities.

Suggested areas of investigation

- Support first and last mile connectivity - expand infrastructure and policy support for e-mobility as a connector to public transport and key destinations.
- Investigate e-mobility access on G:link light rail - explore the feasibility of allowing e-mobility devices on light rail vehicles, like heavy rail, to improve first and last mile travel, multimodal connectivity and reduce on-street parking demand near stations.
- Enhance infrastructure planning - develop State driven guidance for safe, accessible infrastructure that accommodates e-mobility, especially in high traffic and high density areas.
- Statewide technology to support mobility as a service that includes e-mobility.

Conclusion

Privately owned e-mobility on the City's transport system has the potential to offer significant benefits for residents and visitors. However, strategic planning and policy development driven by the State needs to consider e-mobility devices as a legitimate mode of transport to create seamless first and last mile travel options.

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

Background

The increasing use of e-mobility devices on the Gold Coast has raised significant safety concerns. A review of crash data from DTMR for the Gold Coast between November 2022 and May 2025 identified three fatalities and 50 hospitalisation crashes involving PMDs. A review of emergency department presentations, by Gold Coast Health related to e-transport between December 2023 and December 2024 identified 725 presentations, a 76% increase in presentations, with e-scooters accounting for 71% of cases. E-bike-related injuries saw a 138% increase and young males aged 3 to 16 were the most affected demographic.

Identified issues

- Community complaints highlight issues such as excessive speed, lack of enforcement and unsafe rider behaviour.
- Popular areas like the Oceanway and Broadwater Way are frequently cited in community complaints, with concerns about the safety of vulnerable users, including seniors and children.
- Pedestrians of an older age and those supervising children advise they do not feel safe on paths where e-mobility devices are present and have anxiety about these devices moving around them. Pedestrians and cyclists have sought to find alternative routes to avoid e-mobility devices.
- Lifeguards patrolling beaches near the Oceanway report administering first aid for e-mobility related injuries.
- An e-mobility counter-culture has emerged resulting in 'mob' mentality or crowds of young e-bike riders with noncompliant devices. This is a safety and amenity concern for drivers and pedestrians within on-road and off-road environments. Speeding, inappropriate use of noncompliant e-bikes (riding in groups in the travel lane, wheelies etc.), poor attitudes towards safety and a disregard of other road or path users are key community concerns.

Suggested areas of investigation

- Investigation into the definition of active travel for the purposes of understanding where e-mobility fits is needed. Active travel has usually been associated with human powered walking, running and cycling and the introduction of e-mobility has created a significant speed differential causing concerns for safety of pedestrians and safe management of active travel infrastructure.
- Given the current safety performance of e-mobility within investigate the development of State driven guidance on the separation of active travel and e-mobility within on-road and off-road environments.
- Broader communication of the actual risks associated with e-mobility use, compared with the perceived risks.

(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

Background

The rise in e-mobility device ownership, including e-bikes and e-scooters, has introduced new challenges related to the management of lithium-ion batteries. These challenges span across waste disposal, fire safety, and infrastructure readiness. The City is already experiencing issues with smaller lithium batteries and is preparing for future risks associated with larger batteries as the current fleet of devices reach end-of-life.

Identified issues

- Battery disposal and fire risk:
    - Smaller lithium batteries, often disposed of in household bins are causing frequent fires in waste collection trucks.

  - Larger batteries from e-bikes and electric vehicles are currently being stockpiled, but pose a future safety risk as they begin to reach end-of-life in greater volumes.

- Infrastructure and building safety:

  - There is need for State-issued design guidance or building code provisions for safe battery charging and storage.

  - Existing residential buildings need appropriate retrofitting solutions for safe charging, to reduce the risk of fire incidents.

Suggested areas of investigation

- Device safety standards:

  - Review and update e-bike and e-scooter regulations to include maintenance, servicing, and roadworthiness requirements to ensure safety features on devices are operating satisfactorily.

- Waste management:

  - Establish or support industry led stewardship schemes for the recycling of large batteries.

- Building and fire safety:

  - Introduce fire rated charging/storage rooms in new residential developments.

  - Provide retrofitting options for existing buildings, such as:

    - Outdoor charging enclosures

    - Battery lockers

    - Smart charging systems with thermal sensors and automatic shutoffs.

(7) Communication and education about device requirements, rules, and consequences for unsafe use

Background

The City of Gold Coast has initiated several collaborative efforts for public awareness and education around the safe use of e-mobility devices. This includes the City developing the Gold Coast e-bike and e-scooters working group. The key stakeholders are the City of Gold Coast, DTMR, QPS, Gold Coast Health and the Royal Automobile Club of Queensland. This partnership aims to develop consistent communication and educational material to promote safer e-mobility practices. Key initiatives include the production of brochures, digital content and community engagement events such as road safety pop-ups that feature participation by City officers, local Councillors, DTMR and QPS. The City has also distributed educational materials through libraries, community centres, schools and healthcare facilities, and developed content for social media and school newsletters.

Despite these efforts, there is a recognised need for stronger, more impactful messaging particularly targeting minors.

Identified issues

- Target demographics:
    - Communication efforts need to better target consumers, parents and particularly younger male riders, who are often overrepresented in unsafe riding behaviours and injury data.
- Limited impact of current messaging:
    - Existing educational materials lack the impactful language needed to influence behaviour, particularly among minors.
    - There is a need for stronger, clearer messaging about the injury risks and legal consequences of unsafe or illegal e-mobility use.
    - Many users and parents are unaware of which devices are compliant with regulations.
    - Drivers may not fully understand the speed and maneuverability of e-mobility devices, affecting their ability to respond safely in traffic situations.

Suggested areas of investigation

- Strengthen messaging:
    - Develop harder-hitting safety messages, especially targeting minors and their parents. Use more direct language in school communications and public campaigns.
- Expand educational outreach on road rules for e-bikes and road rules for e-scooters:
    - Continue QPS school based education programs and expand community engagement opportunities.
    - Target e-mobility retailers and consumers with educational resources to identify compliant versus noncompliant devices and applicable fines and penalties.
    - Investigate and develop education resources for driver perception to include understanding the faster maneuverability of e-mobility devices and how to safely interact with them on roads.

Conclusion

While the City has made significant progress with the Gold Coast e-bikes and e-scooter working group in communications, community engagement and education, further investigation and action is needed at the Statewide level to ensure messaging is impactful, targeted, and widely distributed. Stronger language, broader outreach and enhanced interagency collaboration will be key to improving safety outcomes for all road users. A focus on driver perception of e-mobility device capabilities is also required.

(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.

Background

The rise of e-mobility on the Gold Coast has introduced new challenges for its transport system. A comprehensive e-mobility framework is needed that focusses on simple Road Rules, consistent methods of speed management and regulation, safety and ensuring on-road and active travel infrastructure standards are suitable for e-mobility. The framework needs to be reviewed on a regular basis to align with changes in technology.

Identified issues

- Complex and confusing Road Rules:
    - Current rules for e-mobility devices are inconsistent and difficult for community members to understand. There is a lack of clarity around what constitutes a compliant device, who can ride the different devices and where the different e-mobility devices can be ridden.
- Inconsistent speed management:
    - There is confusion among the community in relation to the applicable speed limits for the different e-mobility devices. To compound this, there are limited options available to local governments to sign speed limits on paths.
- Active travel infrastructure:
    - The influx of e-mobility devices and their use on active travel infrastructure is a safety concern for the community, evident from the rise in complaints received from residents and visitors.
    - The City's pathways have not been designed for the volume, speed, weight and acceleration of e-mobility devices.
    - Unregulated parking of private and shared devices can cause accessibility issues, especially for people with disabilities.
    - Tourists and people attending major events frequently use e-mobility devices, requiring clear rules and safe infrastructure. Planning for the 2032 Olympic Games should include sustainable e-mobility integration.
    - There is a need for updated technical guidance from the State to support infrastructure planning and design. Current guidance does not reflect the needs of micromobility users.

Suggested areas of investigation

- Advance the recognition amongst decision makers, across all levels, of the need to use public space (including roads) more efficiently including dedicated and separated space for the use of legal e-bikes and PMDs.

- To assist practitioners, the State, through the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) should update technical guidance to reflect the desired infrastructure treatments for the safe operation of e-mobility devices.

- Align the State's technical guidance on active transport infrastructure to prioritise the safety, convenience and access of pedestrians above other modes, while recognising the needs of e-mobility users.

Conclusion

E-mobility is rapidly evolving and increasingly interacts with local government responsibilities. The inquiry needs to recognise the growing role of local governments and support reforms that reflect the needs of all road users, regulatory frameworks, speed management and infrastructure planning.