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

General Position

As a researcher at the University of Queensland with a focus on urban mobility, school travel behaviour, and evaluation of cycling infrastructure, I welcome this inquiry and support the expansion of safe and sustainable e-mobility options in Queensland. My insights are grounded in multiple research projects and field-based assessments, which have included, On-site observations in urban and suburban areas; Stakeholder interviews and crowdsourced surveys on mobility behaviour and safety perception; and School travel mode-choice surveys, including data related to personal mobility devices (PMDs), socio-demographic factors, and safety perceptions across varying urban environments.

My submission focuses on the use of e-mobility for school travel, particularly by underage users, and the importance of aligning infrastructure, education, and policy to reflect urban diversity and user vulnerability.

1. Urban Variation and Local Discrepancies

Emerging from research engagement and field observations, there appears to be a gap in how e-mobility safety is experienced and managed across different urban contexts in Queensland. While newly developed residential areas, particularly Priority Development Areas (PDAs), are often perceived as clean, quiet, and well-organised, this perception may obscure underlying safety issues. In these areas, users (especially younger ones) may underestimate risk, leading to lower compliance with safety behaviours such as helmet use, speed control, and respectful shared path navigation.

Additionally, these areas often lack consistent speed management, pedestrian-priority design, and clearly defined shared space protocols. Misunderstandings around what constitutes a “safe environment” may result in greater behavioural risks, and residents sometimes express dissatisfaction due to conflicts between modes or unregulated use of space.

In contrast, inner-city areas, though more complex and congested, tend to elicit a stronger sense of situational awareness and caution among users. The higher density, mixed-use nature of these environments often brings safety concerns into sharper focus, leading to more conscious navigation and, in some cases, more active consideration by planners and residents alike.

This variation suggests that policy responses should be sensitive to local context. A uniform approach may overlook how different environments shape both the perception and reality of e-mobility safety, particularly among young or informal users.

2. E-Mobility Use in School Travel: Risks and Behavioural Patterns

Informal evidence from mobility engagement and school travel mapping suggests that e-mobility (including PMDs and bicycles) is commonly used for short school commutes and last-mile connections. Student choices are shaped by perceived convenience, peer influence, and lack of perceived risk.

Helmet use, speed compliance, and awareness of traffic rules are often inconsistent, particularly during afternoon hours when PMDs are used recreationally in public areas. Without adequate guidance or oversight, these patterns can contribute to anti-social behaviour and raise concerns around injury and personal safety. This

shift away from structured active travel modes towards informal e-mobility warrants greater planning and education attention.

3. Socio-Demographic Factors and Local Discrepancies

Mobility behaviours in school catchment areas reflect broader socio-spatial dynamics, though detailed findings remain subject to academic confidentiality. Generally, differences in infrastructure quality, adult supervision, and access to transport alternatives influence how e-mobility is adopted and regulated by families. Perception of safety does not always align with objective safety conditions, something policymakers should consider when designing interventions.

Recommendations

To support safe and inclusive e-mobility use—especially among school-aged users—I propose the following:

1. Stronger Policy and Regulation for Underage Use

- Establish clearer guidance for under-16 PMD use, including mandatory helmet rules, speed limits, and school zone restrictions.
- Introduce online safety training modules or licensing mechanisms for young users and parents.

2. Urban-Specific Policy Frameworks

- Encourage context-sensitive planning that tailors interventions to different urban typologies (e.g., low-density suburbs vs. high-density inner cities).
- Enable local councils to trial or enforce rules specific to school areas, parks, and transit corridors.

3. School Travel Integration

- Integrate PMDs into school mobility plans alongside walking, cycling, and public transport.
- Pilot monitored PMD programs in secondary schools with attention to charging, parking, and safety protocols.

4. Education and Public Awareness

- Fund targeted campaigns promoting safe and lawful PMD use among young people.
- Require PMD retailers and rental providers to distribute printed safety guides.
- Engage schools in delivering safety workshops tailored to local needs and age groups.

Final Note

E-mobility offers a sustainable and flexible transport solution, but the current usage by vulnerable groups, particularly school students, requires immediate attention. My research findings suggest the need for a more nuanced and localised approach that combines regulation, design, and education to ensure safe and equitable outcomes.