


Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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Submission to the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee Inquiry on E-Mobility Safety and Use in Queensland

Introduction

I am an active user of a pedal-assist e-bike, using it daily for commuting, errands, and social visits on the Gold Coast. My wife also rides an e-bike for her daily commute and together we have gone down to a one car household thanks to the convenience and flexibility these bikes provide. I welcome this inquiry and hope my experiences help show both the opportunities and challenges of e-mobility in Queensland.

1. Benefits of E-Mobility

One of the biggest benefits of using an e-bike is how consistent and reliable travel times are, especially during peak hour. Unlike driving, where traffic can be unpredictable and stressful, I can depend on my ride taking the same amount of time no matter the time of day. This makes planning my day much easier and more efficient. There have been many occasions where riding my bike has been not just a better experience, but actually the faster option. The ability to bypass congestion and avoid the hassle of parking is a huge advantage particularly on the Gold Coast where car traffic can be heavy. And when I have access to a separated path, riding becomes not just a mode of transport, but a chance to clear my head, a genuinely joyful way to move through the city.

Beyond convenience, e-bikes have been a great help during the cost of living crisis. Not having to own two cars has provided significant savings. If infrastructure were improved, I believe many more people would adopt e-bikes, which would further reduce car traffic and improve community health and safety.

The added assistance from an e-bike makes journeys that might have once felt too far, too hilly, or too difficult on a traditional bike suddenly feel easy and achievable. This is especially valuable for people who may not be regular cyclists or older riders. It opens up active transport to a much wider range of people. Not being sweaty when arriving at your destination is a huge plus. South East Queensland in particular has a great climate for this kind of travel, mostly flat terrain, mild winters, and a population that already loves being outdoors. E-mobility builds on that lifestyle and could be embraced widely with the right support.

2. Safety Issues

There are many parts of the Gold Coast where I've had close calls with cars while riding. Over time, I've built a mental map of these danger zones and have adjusted my routes accordingly to avoid risk. But those changes often come at a cost, adding time to my journey or introducing new risks elsewhere. There are spots where cars regularly drift into bike lanes, or where lanes abruptly disappear forcing riders into traffic. Speed is another major factor. In built up areas vehicle speeds are simply too high to make streets feel safe for people, and lowering speed limits should be a key part of making our roads more people friendly.

My wife's daily commute to the train station is a good example of the overall problem: there is no truly safe, continuous bike route. One option has better separation from cars but is unlit, muddy, and has a history of reported assaults — a completely unacceptable situation for a young woman riding alone. The other route is longer and requires riding on a main arterial road where she's pushed from a painted bike lane into live traffic. This shows that while there are some good sections of infrastructure, they're disconnected. You always have to pass through unsafe gaps to get anywhere. Choosing to ride a bike shouldn't require people to be daredevils. The current system puts the responsibility on riders to be brave, rather than designing infrastructure that is genuinely safe. I've reported these safety gaps to the appropriate authorities but too often convenience for drivers wins out over safety for people riding.

3. Ownership and Battery Safety

There's been a noticeable surge in kids and teenagers using e-bikes on the Gold Coast, and it's easy to see why. Before e-bikes a car was often the only viable way to get around. Public and active transport options were limited, and many families live in suburbs designed around car travel. Teenagers want freedom. They want a way to get to their friends' houses, the beach, or the shops without relying on their parents. I understand this well, having grown up on the western side of the M1 where car ownership was essential for independence.

The problem is that many of these bikes are cheap, throttle-only models that don't meet safety standards and are often capable of high speeds. Unsafe riding behaviour is common. However, the solution shouldn't just be punitive. This is an opportunity to properly regulate these devices while investing in safe, affordable infrastructure to support kids and families moving without cars.

Regarding battery safety, my wife and I chose reputable e-bike brands with high standard Bosch batteries, which are safer but more expensive. The real risk lies in cheap, unregulated devices with unknown battery quality. I believe tighter import regulations, education on safe charging and disposal, and subsidies for reputable brands would help manage these risks sensibly.

4. Regulatory Framework and Enforcement

The current regulatory framework needs to catch up with the rapid rise of e-mobility devices. Clear distinctions between pedal assist and throttle controlled bikes, sensible speed limits and rules around where devices can be ridden should be enforced consistently.

Unsafe riding, especially among youth on fast throttle bikes, is a concern. I've seen this behaviour firsthand, yet enforcement appears limited. Focusing solely on penalties is unlikely to solve the problem without better infrastructure and education to support safer riding.

5. Gaps Between Commonwealth and Queensland Laws

I am aware that non-compliant e-bikes are readily available, particularly through online sales, which creates a challenge for Queensland's regulatory framework. When purchasing my own e-bike, I deliberately avoided cheaper, unregulated models that do not meet safety standards. However, many people, including parents buying bikes for their children, may unknowingly purchase illegal or unsafe devices due to lack of clear regulation and enforcement at the import level. This gap between Commonwealth import laws and Queensland's state regulations allows these dangerous devices to enter the market unchecked. To address this, I believe stronger coordination between federal and state governments is essential, with tighter import controls and clearer standards that align with state safety and usage rules. Without this, illegal devices will continue to undermine safety and the integrity of the e-mobility market.

6. Communication and Education

In my experience, most e-mobility riders are fairly well versed in the relevant laws and safety requirements. When I bought my bike from a reputable store, I received clear guidance on rules, helmet use, and safe riding practices. However, the bigger challenge often comes from non-law-abiding car drivers who do not respect bike lanes or vulnerable road users. This creates dangerous situations that cannot be solved by rider education alone.

Another concern is the growing number of young kids riding e-bikes, often using cheap, fast throttle-only models that are not well regulated. Many of these young riders are still learning and sometimes engage in risky behaviour, which increases safety risks for themselves and others. Better education targeted at young riders, along with regulation of these devices, is necessary to reduce dangerous riding and promote responsible use.

That said, there is still room to improve communication, especially for those buying bikes online or new users unfamiliar with local regulations. Better education at the point of sale, whether

in-store or online, along with public awareness campaigns, clearer signage on bike paths, and school programs would help ensure all riders and the broader community understand the rules and consequences of unsafe behaviour. A combined approach targeting both riders and drivers is essential to improve safety for everyone.

7. Broad Stakeholder Perspectives

As an active e-bike user, I can personally attest to both the benefits and challenges of current e-mobility infrastructure and policies. Encouraging more people to swap car trips for bike rides, especially using e-bikes, offers significant benefits for individuals, communities, and governments alike. From a government perspective, investing in bike infrastructure is far more cost effective than building or maintaining roads for cars. Bike paths require less space, less materials, and lower ongoing maintenance costs. This makes active transport infrastructure a smart, economical way to improve overall transport networks.

There is a real opportunity for e-mobility to be adopted as a serious mode of transport in Queensland. For example, my parents both own e-bikes and love riding them, but typically drive their bikes to well established trails like the Oceanway or Northern Rivers Rail Trail because they feel unsafe using many of the connecting roads. This pattern is common. Many people own e-bikes but limit their use to recreational rides rather than daily commuting because of infrastructure gaps and safety concerns.

With strategic government investment in safe, continuous, and connected bike infrastructure, a rapid uptake in daily e-bike ridership could occur. This shift would reduce car congestion, lower greenhouse gas emissions, improve public health through increased physical activity, reduce road maintenance costs, and enhance community wellbeing by fostering social connections and safer streets. Supporting e-mobility aligns with modern, sustainable urban planning and benefits everyone from commuters to local businesses.

Conclusion

E-mobility presents a valuable opportunity to reduce car dependence, improve health, and increase community connection. However, without proper infrastructure, regulation, and education, these benefits will be limited, and safety risks will grow.

I urge the committee to recommend investment in continuous, safe active transport infrastructure, sensible regulation of devices, especially fast throttle e-bikes and a comprehensive education and enforcement strategy. Supporting reputable brands with subsidies and tighter import controls on unsafe devices will also protect users and encourage responsible uptake.

Thank you for considering my submission.