

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee
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Submission to Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland. This submission will focus primarily on e-mobility as a means of travel to and within Brisbane Airport precinct.

Airport BUG represents people who ride bicycles, use micro mobility and walk to the Brisbane Airport. Brisbane Airport is a major employment hub with over 20,000 people working in more than 400 businesses. Car parking and the Airtrain are expensive, especially for the many low wage airport employees working in services and hospitality. Public transport service to many areas of Brisbane airport is poor or non-existent. The airport operates 24 hours, public transport does not. As such many airport workers choose to drive or use bicycles, e-scooter and other e-micro mobility devices to travel to their workplaces at Brisbane airport.

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;

E-mobility provides people an option to get around without the costs and limitations inherent in travelling by car or public transport. E-mobility is low cost and does not require a licence or registration.

People working low wage jobs in hospitality, cleaning and labouring at the airport often choose not to drive, saving money on fuel and parking. They are often from one car families, where their partner may need the family car for child care duties so an e-bike or e-scooter is used to travel to work. Many of the young people employed by the fast food franchises at the airport do not have regular access to a motor vehicle or do not have a drivers licence. They either get dropped at work by their parents or siblings in a car, use public transport if available, or they get to work using their e-scooter or e-skateboard.

Car parking at Brisbane Airport is in high demand and the airport corporation is expanding both high-rise car parks at the terminals and surface parking areas for staff. The staff car parking area is a considerable distance from the terminals and a bus is required to ferry staff to and from the car park, which adds to an employee's commute time. The airport charges for staff parking. People who use e-mobility at the airport can usually park for free at their workplace saving time and money.

In Brisbane 31% of residents do not have a driver's licence and most journey to work trips are less than 10 km, a distance easily covered by an e-bike. E-mobility does not require a licence or

registration so it is more inclusive than driving. E-mobility devices are small and do not take up much room when parked.

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

Safety of e-mobility is primarily a function of the road infrastructure. The road managers include the Queensland State Government, The Brisbane City Council and the Brisbane Airport Corporation. There are high quality, safe pathways to some workplaces at Brisbane airport, but generally the road environment around and within Brisbane airport is characterised by multilane, high speed roads often with no footpaths or provision for cycling. Riding bikes, e-scooters and e-mobility devices on these roads is often fraught.

Airport BUG has been lobbying Brisbane City Council and the Brisbane Airport Corporation to make many roads safer by installing protected on road cycle tracks or off-road paths.

Roads leading the airport include Nudgee Road, which has cycle lanes, but Brisbane City Council allows cars to park in them, rendering them unusable. Nudgee Road has seen 27 cycling related crashes since 2001 including [REDACTED] tragic death in 2023. Despite petitions by the community to make Nudgee Rd safer, Council has not acted.

The community has also petitioned council to make Sugarmill Rd and Lamington Avenue safer by building paths or protected bike lanes. Currently Sugarmill Road has no footpath, and e-mobility users must ride on the road with large trucks between parked cars.

The North Brisbane Bikeway would have enabled e-mobility users a safe and legal route to the airport from the CBD. Sadly, the local state member, Tim Nichols MP and the local councillor, Julia Dixon caved to objections from homeowners on Sydney Street and the planned protected bikeway along Dickson Street was cancelled just 500 m short of completion. The Brisbane City Council have not progressed an alternative route.

More people would be able to travel using e-mobility if the road authorities used world's best practice road safety measures which implementing 30km/h on neighbourhood streets, lowering speed limits on roads where cyclists and e-mobility users travel and installing separated infrastructure where roads speeds are high.

3. Issues associated with e-mobility ownership, such as risk of fire, storage and disposal of lithium batteries used in emobility, and any consideration of mitigants or controls;

Many workplaces do not allow e-mobility devices to be charged inside or even stored inside due to concerns about fire. This is a shame and probably unjustified as there are lithium ion batteries in multiple devices and tools in the home and workplace including phones, tablets, vacuum cleaners, and power tools.

The Insurance Council of Australia does not advocate banning e-bikes. In a November 2023 briefing note to insurers it expressed support for the uptake of e-bikes and e-scooters and says it intends to: "Engage with relevant fire authorities in supporting testing and building a better

understanding of emerging risks, particularly in relation to personal mobility devices” and “Engage with the relevant strata groups and associations to support the development of guidance or by-laws to assist in consistent risk management across strata buildings”.

Brisbane Airport is building a new secure storage facility for bikes and e-mobility devices at the Brisbane Airport Domestic Terminal. They have not indicated if charging will be available but e-mobility storage will certainly be permitted at this facility.

4. Suitability of current regulatory frameworks for PMDs and ebikes, informed by approaches in Australia and internationally;

The Brisbane airport is 5km from end to end. E-mobility is a great way to get around the airport. The 25km/h limit for e-mobility feels a bit slow when you have to cover several kilometres on a flat straight route. An increase to 30km/h would match the speed of normal pedal bikes on the flat and make journey times shorter.

The 12km/h limit for e-scooters on footpaths may be appropriate in busy town centres but it is too slow for a journey of kilometres. The 12km/h regulation for e-scooters on footpaths should be reviewed. Perhaps the rule could be amended to apply within 10 metres of a pedestrian and in shopping precincts.

The regulation power of 250W is not suited to cargo bikes which need more power. In Europe cargo bikes are being used for last mile deliveries of packages. This reduces costs and reduces truck traffic on roads. To encourage the delivery of packages and freight by e-mobility, e-bikes will need more power.

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

We are unaware of instances of dangerous riding of e-mobility devices at Brisbane Airport. We recognise in any community, a few people will always behave badly, however most people are law abiding and respectful. E-mobility used recklessly has less chance of injuring another person than a motor vehicle driven recklessly. Reckless hooning by car drivers occurs despite licencing and registration. Appropriate infrastructure, which allows safe separation between e-mobility, pedestrians and motor vehicles, will reduce concerns about e-mobility safety.

6. Gaps between Commonwealth and Queensland laws that allow illegal devices to be imported and used;

The federal government is responsible for control of goods at the border. If a device is ‘illegal’ it should be seized. If illegal devices are being imported the responsible federal minister should be notified. If imported vehicles, including e-bikes, meet criteria in the Australian Design Rules but are used in a manner which is illegal, that is the responsibility of the state police. Also of concern is the different laws governing use of e-mobility (particularly e-scooters) between states. The laws and standards for e-mobility need to be coordinated nationally.

7. Communication and education about device requirements, rules, and consequences for unsafe use; and

A continuing public education campaign to enlighten people about rules for use of e-mobility and the responsibility of drivers around vulnerable road users would be useful. Many people do not know the rules governing driving a car on the road, let alone the rules governing e-mobility. A knowledge of the rules would benefit all road users. It would assist with the acceptance of e-mobility and appreciate the benefits e-mobility brings in reducing the number of cars on the road.

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.

E-mobility is changing how people get around. Queensland needs to understand that a car based transport system is not suitable for many cities and urban areas. It is no longer acceptable to prioritise motor vehicles in the planning of streets and roads in cities. E-mobility is popular and has many benefits for both users and the environment. E-mobility is space efficient, quiet, non-polluting, and because it is speed limited, it is also safer than cars.

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