Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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1. Benefits of e-mobility

My partner and I currently have a 2 year old son and are expecting twins later this year. About 6 months ago we started renting and then purchased an Electric Cargo Bike (Cargo e-bike). The bike provides pedal assist up to 25km/hr (as allowed under current laws) and allows our 2 year old to ride on the back in a 5-point harness child seat, while also providing plenty of storage space.

A Cargo e-bike has changed our family's life. We now use the bike to replace driving to/from day care in the morning and afternoon. My son's daycare is 3km away from our house, where we both work full time. That is about a 8 minute drive, 45 minute walk or a 12 minute bike ride. As working parents we don't have time to walk 3 hours a day to drop him off and pick him up so we used to drive our car.

With an electric e-bike we can now bike ride to/from day care instead. It's a lot more fun for our toddler as he loves the bike. It also reduces wear on the road, reduces congestion through busy school areas, reduces pollution around schools and day cares, reduces emissions, saves us money on fuel and increases our fitness and health.

We live in Mount Gravatt and would not be able to ride up and down the hills with a toddler on the back of a normal bike, it's only possible because it's an e-bike. Let alone 3 kids once the twins arrive!

As well as the daily commute we use our e-bike to do activities on the weekend. We are constantly bike riding to the local shops to get groceries or other items. I have purchased multiple rolls of turf from a local Bunnings using the bike while my toddler also rode on the back. I have even used the bike to ride to local polliing stations to avoid traffic and parking. We also ride to local parks that are too far to walk to, saving a car trip in the process.

We really have replaced all local driving with bike rides. This saves us fuel costs, reduces our emissions and everyone is healthier and happier. My mother in law is visiting soon and she is going to rent another e-bike to get around the local suburbs, avoiding driving altogether.

2. Safety issues associated with e-mobility use

Although e-bikes have provided so many benefits to our family we do have safety issues. The number one issue is cars. Brisbane does not have a dedicated bike network so we are usually on the road for at least some of every journey.

Even with a toddler on the back of the bike, we are constantly in near misses with cars. Cars regularly perform dangerous overtakes, missing the bike by centimetres, while speeding past at over 60km/hr. If we ride on the footpath cars regularly ignore give way laws at interesections [1] and driveways. None of these current laws are ever enforced by police which only compounds to the problem.

Ideally we just need separate dedicated bike lanes with barriers seperating cars and bikes. These should be expanded from the Veloway, for example down Logan road.

Reducing the speed limit on Queensland roads would also be a massive improvement. A default 30km/hr speed limit on unsigned roads, with major roads (Logan Road, Newnham Road, Nursey Road, Creek Road, Broadwater Road) slowed down to 50km/hr would provide enormous community safety, while having minimal impact on cars.

But at least educating drivers and strictly and heavily enforcing current laws would be a good first step. Cars should be leaving a large and safe gap to bikes (one metre minimum). If they aren't able to do that then they will have to wait behind the bike until it is safe to overtake.

Another improvement would be increasing the speed at which the pedal assist cuts out to 32km/hr. This means that the speed differential between bikes and cars would be lower, hopefully resulting in less dangerous overtakes by impatient drivers. This is similar to the existing laws in New Zealand [2] and in Canada.

Finally it's important to take bikes into account when closing roads or paths. When roads or paths are closed it's rare that a suitable alternative is made for bikes, while somethign is always provided for cars. It is critical that a safe route for bikes is provided, by for example closing just a single lane of traffic that could easily be accommodated.

3, Issues associated with e-mobility ownership

We purchases a high end Bosch powered bike that uses Bosch batteries meeting a range of European standards. We also avoid charging the bike over night while we are asleep. We have no concerns of fire risk.

We easily store the bike under our raised up Queensland style house. At the end of life for the battery I'm expecting to dispose of the batteries the same way as current cordless tools, vapes and other Lithium batteries are disposed of.

4. Suitability of current regulatory frameworks

As mentioned in section 2, increasing the maximum speed of pedal assist of e-bikes to 32km/hr would allow for a smaller speed differential with cars. This is similar to the existing laws in New Zealand [2] and in Canada.

This would be especially effective if combined with a Queensland wide speed limit reduction, ideally to 30km/hr on unsigned roads [3].

If that were to occur it would also be a good idea to set a speed limit for bikes on shared pedestrian/bike paths to 25km/hr or something similar.

It would also be worth simplifying the current e-bike regulations, see the quote below.

"For a start, references to motor power should be removed because the severity of a crash depends on speed not the power of the device. Having the regulations framed in terms of power is a complication for enforcement and we donâ€™t use it to regulate motor vehicles." - https://theconversation.com/e-bikes-and-e-scooters-are-popular-but-dangerous-a-transport-expert-explains-how-to-make-them-safer-257126

5. Effectiveness of current enforcement approaches

Police are ineffective at enforcing road laws, putting everyone at risk. There should be much stronger enforcement and punishment when cars put vulnerable road users in danger, such as driving too close to bikes or ignoring giveway laws [1].

The Federal government could also be more involved with reducing importation of e-bikes and e-scooters that exceeed the legal limits. Alhtough a more effective approach might be setting and enforcing speed limits.

Overall e-bikes are extremely beneficial to the local community. They are fun, reduce wear on the road, reduce congestion and parking requirements, reduce pollution around schools and day cares, reduce emissions, reduce fuel costs, reduce the cost of living and increase health and fitness.

Queensland should encourage the uptake of active transport by:
- Improve and increase dedicated bike paths so cyclists, pedestrians and cars can avoid each other
- Rigorously enforce current road laws to protect vulnerable users
- Reduce Queensland road speed limits to 30km/hr default on unsigned roads
- Ensure a bike safe route is available when path or road closures are required
- Increase the maximum pedal assist speed to 32km/hr
- Implement a bike speed limit on pedestrian paths
- Simplifying current regulations by focusing only on speed and not on power

1: https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/most-qld-drivers-don-t-know-this-road-rule-will-a-hand-painted-sign-make-a-difference-20250529-p5m34j.html
2: https://www.nzta.govt.nz/walking-cycling-and-public-transport/cycling/cycling-in-new-zealand/electric-bikes/
3: https://space4cyclingbne.com/what-is-space4cyclingbne-3/5-30kmph-residential-speed-limit/