Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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20 June 2025

The Hon. James McDonald MP
Chair, State Development,
Infrastructure and Works
Committee
PO Box 88
GATTON QLD 4343
[redacted]

Dear Minister,

RE: SUBMISSION INQUIRY INTO E-MOBILITY SAFETY AND USE IN QUEENSLAND

Sunshine Coast Council is pleased for the opportunity to provide a submission for this inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland.

The Sunshine Coast region is changing with the population growing and a further 200,000 people forecast to reside in the region by 2046 (from 2021) (Shaping SEQ 2023). People in our community are already expressing concerns about transport options and their ability to move freely about the region.

Sunshine Coast Council's Community Strategy 2019-2041 (2024 Refresh) and Integrated Transport Strategy (2018) outline clear and ambitious targets to increase the share of active and public transport trips and decrease the region's reliance on private vehicle use. Council is committed to supporting sustainable travel options and improving opportunities for people to choose to travel by walking or riding. Council is developing its Draft Active Transport Plan and recognises that lawful e-bikes can contribute to the region's mode shift towards active transport, however, due to the low physical effort required by e-scooter users these devices are not recognised as active transport. Through our community consultation activities for the Draft Active Transport Plan, we heard that reducing conflict between different path users and with vehicular traffic is very important with a desire for greater separation between different users.

More broadly e-mobility has the potential to support Council's Corporate Plan 2025-30 which sets a clear vision to be Australia's most sustainable region. Connected. Liveable. Thriving. With more people moving to and about our region, it is important that our transport networks are well-integrated to provide connection between people, places, and spaces, and support our community to thrive. The use of e-Mobility in our region has the potential to support health, economic, environmental, and social benefits for riders and the broader Sunshine Coast Community

However, the types of e-mobility options are expanding through emerging technologies and there is a need for the transport network to adapt to accommodate the separation of walkers, riders, and e-mobility users to ensure it feels safe and inclusive for all ages, genders, and abilities to use.

The growth of e-mobility and use of compliant 'legal' e-bikes and e-scooters in the Sunshine Coast is welcomed to balance the rapid growth in private vehicle use across the region and demands on the local and regional transport network.

Council supports the appropriate and safe use of compliant e-mobility devices that meet the required national and international safety standards as a means of transport for young adults, adults, and seniors, for school, tertiary, utility, employment, and recreational and leisure trips as well as sports participation.

Due to the settlement disbursement of the region and some coastal and hinterland community hilly terrain, the transition to an e-bike is a possible solution to overcome a range of physical barriers to bike riding. The use of e-bikes supports longer distances to be travelled without the use of a car and with scope for residents and visitors to enjoy the benefits of active travel within the region.

The Sunshine Coast region has one of the highest car ownership rates with over 57% of households having more than two cars compared to 55% in South East Queensland. The new Maroochydore City Centre, which is designed to be low car dependent development, relies on residents, workers and visitors choosing active travel and swapping a second car for a conventional bike or e-bike as transport around their community. E-mobility must remain a viable attractive option and complement the use of conventional bicycles to reduce private vehicle car dependency across the region and in principal activity centres.

The encouragement of light electric vehicles is seen as a means to address the communities' growing concerns with traffic congestion, noise, and air pollution emissions. However, over the past four years Council observed a significant growth in the use of high powered non-compliant illegal e-mobility devices and is struggling to manage urgent issues surrounding these devices that is impacting the safety of people using Council's pathway and local road network.

Key Issues in the Region

- Local retailers are selling non-compliant e-bikes and e-scooters, primarily oversized 'fat bikes' / 'cruiser' models that are throttle controlled with limited regulation on their sale. The majority of devices are used on Council's local road network and shared pathways. These devices are overpowered, and many are modified after 'point of sale' by the purchaser. The speed of these devices can reach in excess of 60km/hr.

- Young people predominately high school age are utilising illegal oversized 'fat bikes' / 'cruiser' style bikes as transport to school and for recreational, utility and employment trips. The sale of these electric bikes has boomed across the region. The growth has predominately been in coastal communities with limited hinterland use. These bikes appeal to a certain demographic and are proving more popular than a traditional e-hybrid, e-mountain (hardtail / dual suspension), e-road or e-gravel bike. It is suspected that the higher upper speed limit in excess of 25km/hr is a key attraction to purchasing and modifying these devices to travel at higher operating speeds. These devices can be readily observed in the designated bike parking facilities in Education Queensland high schools across the Sunshine Coast.

- The current upper speed limits for compliant pedal assisted e-bikes does not completely cater for the needs of people seeking to use an e-bike to replace a car for commuting purposes, especially for longer regional trips on undulating hilly routes. The desire for an upper speed and power limit is often cited as a limiting factor to purchase a compliant e-bike. Hence the trend towards purchasing e-bikes and e-scooters with higher operating speeds.

- E-mobility riders are using shared pathways and pathways suitable for pedestrian only use at speeds not conducive to the pathway environment. Wider pathways are predominately located in emerging communities while established residential areas have narrower pathways that are not suitable for higher speed e-mobility devices. There is a need for a continuous, connected path networks that improve the safety and comfort for people walking and riding.

- Council does not have a fully connected separated cycleway network that is better suited to managing e-mobility devices and the completion of the network requires substantial capital investment from both State and Local Government.

- Council faces challenges and resistance from the community to upgrade its extensive path network and local road network to better cater for the growth in e-mobility devices to manage user conflicts as well as cater for conventional bicycle use. The widening of narrow pathways to achieve a higher design standard is often required and will require loss of verge landscaping and on street parking space to accommodate new facilities.

- Reckless and inappropriate use on local road network and shared pathways is often on illegal e-bikes, e-scooters, and e-motorbikes.

- The power and speed setting of certain devices is unsuitable for the intended use in the public realm and the standard of existing pathway infrastructure and requires stricter management and enforcement.

- The safe disposal / recycling of lithium-ion batteries, at Council's waste facilities from e-mobility devices is becoming a growing issue as the first- and second-generation devices reach disposal age.

- Influx of lower standard devices and proper management of risks associated with e-mobility battery device charging within Council property and buildings.

- Lower standard e-bikes and e-scooters are not able to be disassembled, significantly adding to the risks and costs of safely storing and disposing of these devices. Costs

to recycle battery embedded devices is $7.50/kg (not including transportation) compared to $0/kg for recycling loose or removable lithium batteries under 5kg, through the B-Cycle scheme (not including transportation).

- Any attempt by Council to obtain fee recovery to cover costs of e-bike and e-scooter recycling is likely to result in illegal dumping, disposal of items to waste streams increasing risk of dangerous lithium battery fires.

- There are no lithium battery recyclers in Queensland. Battery recyclers for lithium batteries are based in Victoria. Transportation costs are not currently included within the B-Cycle scheme adding to the costs of safely disposing of lithium batteries from these devices.

- The limited / ad hoc response by Queensland Police Service to the illegal use of e-mobility devices is causing frustration across the Sunshine Coast community. Council does not have the powers to enforce State Road legislation managing e-mobility device use.

- Education and safety campaigns are required with collaboration between Council and State Government. Current campaigns have limited effectiveness on younger cohort of users who are using illegal overpowered e-bikes and e-scooters.

- There is a lack of regulation around e-bikes compared to e-scooters. There is no legal age requirement for e-bike use as opposed to e-scooters which may be contributing to the shift from e-scooters to e-bikes for school age students.

- There have been several fatalities and serious causalities involving e-scooter and e-bike use across the region that has heightened the need for greater education on the current road rules surrounding their appropriate use. Many of these accidents have occurred with the user riding a non-compliant device.

- Several state schools in the region have banned the use of e-scooters to comply with State Road rules and address community safety concerns. Council is supportive of the school's position to enforce State Road rules. Council's general position is to promote primary aged children to travel to school on conventional bikes and push scooters or by walking. Council has developed the very successful 'RideScore Active Schools Program' that promotes increased riding and scootering to school and has established the program across 11 regional state primary schools. This program will continue to be expanded across the Sunshine Coast Council area to increase the rates of primary school aged children traveling to school by active travel.

- Council does not currently support ‘shared’ commercial e-bike and e-scooter schemes in the region. A recent trial was discontinued due to community concerns with poor parking practices and safety concerns, particularly in high pedestrian use areas. In the short term there is no desire from Council to allow commercial shared e-bike and e-scooter into public spaces that require parking and charging infrastructure on public land due to a risk to public safety and amenity.

- Council has a responsibility to work with State Agencies to provide a safe transport environment. One of the roles we can play is in assisting with community education on safe and appropriate user behaviours as well as provide safe infrastructure for community use. However, many of the issues that need to be addressed are outside of the control of Council and a range of key issues need to be urgently addressed at a State and Federal level to:

  - Regulate the import of illegal, unsafe, and overpowered devices across the State.
  - Improve the regulation of retailers who are selling illegal and non-compliant e-mobility devices.
  - Consider the mix of e-bikes and existing maximum upper speed limits on existing compliant pedalec devices.
  - Consider the legal framework surrounding e-mobility device insurance (compulsory third party CTP and personal injury) and impacts of litigation and disputes between parties.
  - Review legal age requirements for e-bikes and penalties for minors.
  - Update road rules and other road transport legislation to manage unsafe e-mobility device use.

Key Recommendations

The following key recommendations are provided for consideration as part of this inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland.

Recommendation 1

The State Government continues to support e-mobility including e-bike and e-scooters that meets current Queensland regulation requirements (current maximum assisted speed of 25km/hr and maximum of 250w maximum continuous rated power). The State Government should not consider limiting of e-bike default speed for road / cycleway use below 25km/hr. Any reduction will severely impact the attractiveness and competitiveness of an e-bike to replace a private motor vehicle as a mode of transport.

It is recommended to maintain current e-scooter laws where riders must adhere to 12km/hr on footpaths and shared paths and 25km/hr on designated cycleways and roads with a speed limit of 50km/hr or less and on all on road bikes lanes that are physically separated.

Recommendation 2

Consideration to be given to a greater upper speed limit for pedal assisted e-bikes to either 32km/hr and or 45km/hr under a new e-bike class (suggest speed pedalec as per European Standards) to address the consumers desire for an increase in the speed limit above 25km/hr. This category would be different to an e-moped or e-motorbike. Greater regulation

could be prescribed for this category with stricter regulations that cover bike standards, licencing, age restrictions and limitations on where they can be ridden. It is recommended that such devices should only be used within on-road bike lanes and separated cycle track facilities. Further safety measures could include possible registration of the e-bike that fell into this higher speed limit category. This change would improve travel times and make e-bikes more competitive with other transport modes and appeal to a broader demographic of user with varied fitness levels and importantly may reduce the likelihood of unsafe illegal e-bike modifications.

Note: 32 kilometres per hour is considered a potential speed that fit riders can maintain on flat terrain without power assistance. This speed can make riders feel safer in a road environment. It is noted that people riding an e-bike can travel above the maximum speed assistance if the rider is physically able to do so.

Recommendation 3

The State Government should review the definition of an e-bike and continue to align legislation with European Standard EN15194 (or another appropriate international standard). The State Government should work with the Federal Government to fully align with appropriate international standards and regulations and achieve consistency across each State.

Devices that fall outside of the definition of a ‘bicycle’ require clear identification such as the electric motorbikes that are throttle controlled but sold as e-bikes.

Recommendation 4

Amend State Legislation to allow for the broader seizure, confiscation and possible destruction of e-bikes and e-scooters by Queensland Police Service similar to Queensland anti hooning laws but specific for non-compliant e-bikes and e-scooters that are ridden in an unsafe, antisocial manner, posing community safety risks.

Recommendation 5

The State Government should lobby and work with the Federal Government as a matter of urgency to ensure a nationally consistent approach to e-bike and e-scooter legislation contained in the Road Vehicles Standards Act (2018). There is a requirement to improve device standards and definitions to close ‘loopholes’ in the import of devices that have lower battery standards and contain drive motors that can be modified to higher speed limits. An overhaul of standards and definitions set for the importation, sale and use of e-mobility devices is required to stop the sale of inferior ‘illegal’ overpowered devices that have presently ‘flooded’ the local e-mobility market.

The current import legislative framework is inadequate and has allowed the approval, importation and distribution of e-mobility devices that do not meet the standards such as EN15194. E-bike wattage limits and speed control is essential that do not allow for modification.

Devices that are throttle controlled should only be authorised via a medical exemption for those that suffer from a medical condition that requires a throttle-controlled e-bike.

E-bikes that are deemed to be electric motorbikes e.g. a SURON bike should only be sold by an authorised motorbike dealership and not at an electric bicycle retailer.

Recommendation 6

The State Government should work with the Federal Government on anti-tampering legislation for e-bikes and e-scooters to restrict the manipulation of electric drivetrain motors to obtain higher operating speeds. Strict penalties should apply to individuals that tamper and manipulate electric bike drivetrain motors to increase operating speeds for public road and pathway use.

Recommendation 7

The sale of overpowered e-bikes for private use only on private property require improved identification via plate / sticker or symbols that allow for easier recognition by authorities. Any e-bike that features speed allowances or power limits over the legal road speed limit (25km/hr) must be clearly marked as 'private property use only'. If these devices are found in use on the public road network and off-road pathways, they should face possible seizure and confiscation.

Recommendation 8

Greater policy and technical guidance are required for safe e-bike and e-scooter charging as part of end of trip facilities to encourage active travel. Appropriate parking and safe charging facilities are required to encourage greater uptake of e-mobility. Technical guidelines should be considered on Bike Parking Facilities for e-mobility devices.

Recommendation 9

The State Government should investigate the feasibility of utilising current geofencing technology and emerging technologies to control private e-scooter usage to remotely enforce speed zones in high pedestrian use areas similar to shared commercial micromobility schemes.

Recommendation 10

The State Government should strengthen planning policies requiring new developments delivered by the State Government and private developers to deliver high standard active transport infrastructure and support facilities to cater for growing e-mobility devices. This includes separated bicycle paths, charging equipment and storage.

Recommendation 11

The State Government should consider developing website information on e-bike and e-scooter models that do not comply with e-bike and e-scooter standards and that do not conform to Qld Road rule regulations to better inform the community prior to purchase. This information should be regularly updated and allow use by Council as part of local education campaigns on appropriate e-mobility devices to be used in the public realm.

Recommendation 12

The State Government via the Qld Police Service should undertake enforcement operations in a greater capacity in the Sunshine Coast Region to manage anti-social and unsafe riding behaviours. The use of surveillance technology e.g. drones and CCTV to monitor unsafe practices to enable apprehension of offending riders should be considered. Consideration should be given to compliance checks within Secondary Schools to identify illegal, non-compliant e-bikes and e-scooters.

Recommendation 13

The State Government should consider amendments to legislation that allows for minors between 10 and 18 years of age that commit a traffic offence whilst riding an e-bike or e-scooter and who receive fines to not be eligible for a learner and or provisional drivers licence until all fines are paid. Unpaid fines for illegal and dangerous offences using an e-scooter and e-bike whilst licenced should impact their ability to drive a motor vehicle, where applicable.

Recommendation 14

Council does not support the mandatory signing of speed limits on shared pathways and bikeways that target e-mobility device users. The implementation of speed signs on the shared pathway and bikeway network would be cost prohibitive and result in excessive signage clutter, impacting amenity within the public realm. The physical posting of speed limits would be impractical to monitor and enforce and place additional demands on Council to address customer requests with confusion over jurisdiction on enforcement of the speed limits.

Recommendation 15

Council encourages and supports a State subsidy program for compliant / legal e-bike purchases via a rebate scheme to encourage further uptake of e-bikes to support more people riding. Such a program assists Council's Travel Behaviour Change programs to promote sustainable transport.

Recommendation 16

The State Government should work with other agencies to manage the sale and installation of aftermarket electric conversion kits being attached to a conventional bicycle. Stricter regulation is required to meet international standards to ensure the bicycle remains pedal assisted with necessary speed controls.

Recommendation 17

The State Government should implement age restrictions for e-bikes to bring them into line with e-scooter use in Qld. This will help reduce the number of school aged children riding e-bikes and confusion amongst the community around who can and cannot ride e-bikes.

Recommendation 18

The State Government should review the roads that personal mobility devices can be ridden on to expand to allow use on roads with centre lines under 50km per hour. This will reduce the number of riders using the shared pathways and reduce conflicts with pedestrians.

Recommendation 19

The State Government should undertake further research into e-mobility user preferences and trends to inform evidence-based decisions and share data insights with local government to inform education and engagement activities.

Recommendation 20

The State Government should work with the Federal Government to expand the B-Cycle scheme to include transportation costs, and to include first generation e-bikes and e-scooters that cannot be disassembled (until such time as regulation that lithium batteries within the devices must be able to be removed and replaced).

Sunshine Coast Council once again welcomes the opportunity to make this submission, and we look forward to further discussions with the Inquiry Committee and working with the State Government to improve the safe use of e-mobility devices across the Sunshine Coast Region.

Regards

Ben McGovern

Acting Group Executive Built Infrastructure

Sunshine Coast Coucnil