

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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This submission is made in response to growing community concerns regarding the safety risks posed by illegal, high-powered electric bicycles (e-bikes) operating on Queensland roads, footpaths, and cycleways. While e-bikes provide a sustainable and accessible form of transport, the misuse of high-powered models—often modified or non-compliant with Australian Design Rules—presents a clear and escalating threat to public safety, infrastructure use, and legal transport systems.

Current Legal Framework Under Queensland law, e-bikes are classified as either: Pedalec e-bikes (max 250W motor, with pedal assist up to 25km/h), or Standard power-assisted bicycles (max 200W motor without pedal assistance). Any e-bike exceeding these specifications is considered a motor vehicle and must be registered, insured, and operated by a licensed rider—none of which typically applies in cases of illegal use.

Key Safety Concerns

- Speed and Power Capabilities** Many high-powered e-bikes reach speeds of 50–80 km/h or more, far exceeding the capabilities of legal models. These speeds are extremely dangerous in pedestrian and shared zones.
- Collisions** Involving high-powered e-bikes can result in severe injury or death for riders, pedestrians, and other road users.
- Regulatory Evasion** Riders often import or modify bikes to bypass compliance, removing speed limiters or installing throttle systems. These bikes are frequently unregistered, uninsured, and operated by individuals without appropriate training or licensing.
- Enforcement Difficulties** Police and local councils face challenges in identifying illegal e-bikes, particularly when modifications are concealed. There is currently a lack of clarity on enforcement responsibilities and procedures, as well as inconsistency in penalties.

Impact on Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety Shared-use paths and cycleways are increasingly dangerous, with vulnerable users such as children and elderly pedestrians at heightened risk. Legal riders are deterred from using these paths due to the presence of high-speed, aggressive riders on non-compliant vehicles.

Recommendations

- Clearer Legislation and Definitions** Amend legislation to more clearly define legal vs illegal e-bikes, including specific penalties for non-compliance.
- Introduce mandatory labelling or certification** for compliant e-bikes sold in Queensland.
- Enhanced Enforcement Powers** Equip police and transport officers with clearer authority and training to stop and inspect suspect e-bikes.
- Allow for confiscation** of illegal e-bikes found on public roads and shared paths.
- Public Awareness Campaigns** Launch education initiatives to inform the public about the legal standards for e-bikes and the risks of riding illegal versions.
- Work with retailers** to ensure customers are informed at the point of sale about legal limits and penalties for misuse.
- Retailer and Importer Regulation** Regulate the sale of high-powered or modifiable e-bikes through a licensing system for retailers.
- Ban the import or online sale** of throttle-enabled bikes exceeding 250W unless they meet road registration requirements.
- Data Collection and Research** Collect and publish data on e-bike-related incidents to inform future policy.
- Fund research** into the effectiveness of infrastructure and safety programs in reducing incidents involving high-powered e-bikes.

Conclusion Queensland must act urgently to address the risks posed by illegal, high-powered e-bikes. These vehicles—though often marketed as bicycles—can behave more like unregulated motorbikes, operating at high speeds in areas never designed for such use. Strengthening laws, enforcement, public education, and retail controls will be essential to prevent further injuries and ensure the long-term safety and viability of micromobility in Queensland.

Finally, I would like to point out the double standards that I had as a youth. I rode my trail bike on the road to the Deagon Wetlands in 1990. The police were extremely swift to chase us down and threaten us with boys home due to us doing the exact same thing these youths are doing today. I see these young e-bikers doing wheelies on main roads overtaking cars, and in the latest tragedy, even hitting a lollipop lady outside the [REDACTED]

whilst she was holding a stop sign in the middle of the pedestrian crossing. This is completely indefensible and it's turning into the 'norm' as these louts are given free reign on these dangerous vehicles. If this lady has to pay for her own medical bills, it is yet another turning point in the demise of modern society. We thank the Queensland Government for the opportunity to make this submission and welcome further engagement on this issue. Signed, Stephen Wetton