Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

Submission No:	1157
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Publication:	Making the submission and your name public
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

Submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

20th June 2025

To: Queensland State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee

Re: Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

Executive Summary

As Australia's leading bicycle and e-bike retailer operating under the 99 Bikes brand, and a significant importer of e-bikes into Australia, Pedal Group welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry. We believe Queensland has the opportunity to lead Australia in developing practical, safety-focused e-bike regulations that encourage legal product adoption while avoiding the unintended consequences we've observed in other jurisdictions.

This submission addresses each of the inquiry's terms of reference with evidence-based recommendations that balance the significant benefits of e-mobility with legitimate safety concerns, while aligning with existing Queensland Government policies and strategies that already recognize the substantial value of cycling and e-mobility.

About Pedal Group

Pedal Group is Australia's largest bicycle retailer, operating 99 Bikes stores across the country. We are committed to selling legally compliant e-bikes and supporting consumer education about safe e-bike use. Our experience in the market provides valuable insights into consumer demand, safety challenges, and the effectiveness of current regulatory approaches.

Addressing the Inquiry's Terms of Reference

1. Benefits of E-Mobility for Queensland

E-mobility delivers substantial economic, environmental, and health benefits for Queensland. WeRide data shows that bicycle and scooter riders add around $3.5 billion to the Queensland economy annually, including a $1 billion benefit to the health system. The Queensland Government has already recognized these benefits through initiatives like the E-Mobility Rebate Scheme and the Queensland Cycling Strategy 2017-2027, which aim to get "more Queenslanders cycling more often."

E-bikes directly support these goals by making active transport accessible to a broader population, addressing key government priorities related to health, environment, and cost-of-living pressures. The global shift towards e-bikes, which now account for 50-70% of bicycle sales in many European markets, underscores their role as a mainstream, sustainable transport solution.

2. Safety Issues and Crash Data

While safety concerns require evidence-based responses, it is crucial to understand the context. Key factors in incidents often involve motor vehicles, rider behaviour (including intoxication), and inadequate infrastructure, rather than the technology of compliant e-bikes themselves. Better data collection is needed to differentiate between incidents involving legal e-bikes, illegal high-powered bikes, and other personal mobility devices.

3. Fire Risk and Battery Safety

Fire risk from lithium batteries is a legitimate concern. However, evidence shows the primary risks come from illegal e-bikes, low-quality products from online marketplaces, and DIY conversion kits that do not conform to safety standards. Imposing additional testing requirements on already-compliant, reputable products does not address these root causes and may inadvertently increase market share for unsafe alternatives.

4. Regulatory Framework Suitability

Current Australian regulations are among the most restrictive globally, with 25km/h speed limits and 250W power limits that fail to reflect modern e-mobility capabilities or international best practices. Many jurisdictions worldwide operate safely with more practical limits:

- **United States:** Various state-based class systems allowing up to 45km/h with motor assistance and power limits of **750W**.
- **Canada:** Provincial variations allowing higher speeds with power limits of **500W**.
- **New Zealand:** A maximum power output of **300W** with no mandated speed limit for assistance cutoff, leading most brands to offer compliant models that travel between 32-45km/h.

A significant difference in New Zealand, Canada, and some US classes is the **absence of a throttle restriction clause**. This is a major point of departure from Australian laws and demonstrates that safe, effective regulatory frameworks can be achieved without such limitations.

5. Enforcement Effectiveness

Current enforcement faces significant challenges, including police resources and the difficulty of regulating illegal online sales and imports. The **enforcement focus is on compliant retailers rather than illegal imports**, which is the underlying source of the most dangerous products.

6. Commonwealth-State Regulatory Gaps

The primary gap exists at the point of importation, where illegal and non-compliant products enter the Australian market. This federal-state disconnect allows dangerous products to be sold while compliant retailers face an increasing and often misdirected regulatory burden.

Current Market Reality and Enforcement Challenges

We observe significant consumer demand for higher-speed and higher-powered e-bikes, a market we estimate exceeds $100 million in revenue per year and is growing rapidly. This demand is driven by a desire for greater capability on inclines, enhanced cargo capacity, and safer integration with road traffic.

Current enforcement of importation laws and dangerous riding behaviour remains inadequate. Other retailers openly modify bikes in-store without providing adequate risk awareness to customers, creating a significant safety issue that compliant businesses are left to contend with.

Evidence-Based Recommendations

1. Implement a Modern, Two-Class Regulatory Framework

We advocate for an evidence-based review of current restrictions, proposing a two-class system:

- **Class 1 (Pedelec):**
  - **Speed Limit:** 35km/h on roads, 25km/h on shared paths/footpaths.
  - **Power Limit:** 500W continuous motor output.
  - **Throttle:** Permitted, but limited to shared path speed (25km/h).
- **Class 2 (Speed Pedelec):**
  - **Speed Limit:** 45km/h on roads. Not permitted on shared paths.
  - **Power Limit: 1000W** continuous motor output, to future-proof the category and provide a legal avenue for the many 1000W systems already being imported.
  - **Throttle:** Permitted, limited to road speed (45km/h).
  - **Requirements:** Registration and licensing required.

2. Focus on Root Causes, Not Compliant Products

Queensland must avoid the regulatory approach adopted by NSW Fair Trading, which imposes additional testing on already-compliant products. This has led to quality brands like **Scott Bicycles** withdrawing E-bikes from the market, increasing the market share for unsafe, illegal e-bikes and creating counter-productive outcomes. The focus must be on illegal imports, DIY kits, and low-quality online products.

3. Strengthen Import Controls and Retailer Accountability

The most effective intervention is preventing illegal products from entering Australia. This requires enhanced customs enforcement and collaboration with the Office of Fair Trading to hold retailers accountable for selling non-compliant products.

4. Targeted Enforcement with Meaningful Penalties

We support expanding enforcement powers to TMR officials. Penalties must be targeted effectively:

- **Sale of Non-Compliant Products:** Substantial fines for retailers knowingly selling illegal bikes.
- **Dangerous Riding:** Penalties for behaviour that endangers the public.
- **Unauthorised Modifications:** Fines for illegal modifications post-purchase that are used outside of private properties
- **Deterring High-Powered Electric Motorbikes:** We urge the committee to consider **far harsher penalties for the use of high-powered electric motorbikes on public roads**. We are witnessing a proliferation of throttle-only devices, often exceeding 12,000W and capable of speeds over 120km/h, being ridden by unlicensed teenagers. Unlike noisy petrol motorbikes, their silence makes them dangerously deceptive. The current legal framework offers effectively zero liability for minors, presenting an extreme risk to the public that requires a meaningful legal deterrent to stop the use of these unregistered and unlicensed motorbikes.

5. Learning from NSW's Regulatory Misstep: The Case for Exemptions

NSW's approach of imposing costly, commercially unviable testing requirements on all products has created a clear lesson. It punishes reputable global brands like **Bosch** and **Shimano**, whose integrated systems are industry benchmarks for safety and quality, while doing nothing to stop dangerous products.

Should Queensland consider a similarly stringent path, we strongly recommend a class of **exempt or pre-approved products**. It is illogical and contrary to environmental policy for suppliers to be forced into destructive testing of systems from world-leading manufacturers like Bosch and Shimano, which are already proven to be safe. A top-tier approval for such integrated, non-modifiable systems would solve administrative headaches and ensure Queenslanders retain access to the safest products on the market.

Conclusion

Queensland has an opportunity to develop a world-leading e-bike framework that captures the technology's benefits while ensuring public safety. This requires a modern, evidence-based approach focused on the true sources of risk—illegal imports and high-powered, unregistered motorbikes—not compliant products from reputable brands.

We urge the Committee to:

1. Focus enforcement on illegal imports and non-compliant products at the source;
2. Avoid NSW's costly and counter-productive approach of re-testing compliant products;
3. Implement a two-class system with modern speed and power limits (up to 1000W for Speed Pedelecs);
4. Create meaningful penalties to deter the use of dangerous, high-powered electric motorbikes;
5. Consider a pre-approval system for trusted, high-quality systems from brands like Bosch and Shimano and
6. Invest in safe, connected infrastructure, including dedicated and separated bike paths, to improve safety for all road users and encourage modal shift.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

Best Regards,

Andrew Garnsworthy
Pedal Group CEO
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