

Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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I appreciate the opportunity to submit the current legislation regarding personal mobility devices (PMDs) and e-bikes to the committee. While I acknowledge that the initial regulations were introduced hastily in response to the rapid adoption of these devices, there are now several inconsistencies and overly restrictive measures that require attention. Personal mobility devices are a legitimate and increasingly essential mode of transport, particularly for alleviating congestion in our heavily burdened metropolitan areas. Their use should be encouraged not hindered, especially given the relatively low cost of infrastructure maintenance for bikeways and shared paths when compared with road infrastructure. Legislation must reflect their potential as a sustainable and accessible alternative for commuting and short trips. Importantly, any misuse of PMDs and e-bikes by a small group should not justify sweeping restrictions on legitimate users which will in turn reduce their usage and increase congestion. Enforcement and penalties should target individual bad actors, rather than impose further limitations on the broader commuting public, especially when appropriate restrictions and laws already exist such as age restrictions and protective gear requirements.

Inconsistencies in RegulationOne major inconsistency is the restriction of throttle use on eBikes while allowing it on eScooters. Both device categories are subject to the same maximum power output and speed limits; therefore, this differentiation is illogical and counterproductive. If a throttle is acceptable on an eScooter under 25 km/h and 250W, it should equally be permissible on an eBike.

Speed LimitsThe 25 km/h speed limit imposed on PMDs is overly conservative. For context, motor vehicles are permitted to travel at 40 km/h in built-up and shared zones, even in areas of high pedestrian traffic. Moreover, traditional cyclists frequently exceed 25 km/h, often without regulatory concern. Pedal-assisted eBikes, which require physical input, are currently limited in a way that reduces their utility for commuting. A modest increase to 30 km/h would strike a sensible balance, aligning more closely with typical cyclist speeds while preserving safe reaction times for mixed-use paths.

Power Output RestrictionsThe 250W power output limit on eBikes is also unnecessarily restrictive. This output is inadequate for navigating many of Queensland's hilly areas, particularly in cities like Brisbane. The fact that eScooters can use dual motors (still limited to 250W) while eBikes are effectively limited to a single motor configuration illustrates a lack of equality across device types. Allowing for more flexible and proportional power outputs such as a 500W motor, especially in challenging terrain, would improve usability without compromising safety.

Bikeway SafetyMany PMD and e-bike users prefer to use bikeways rather than roads to reduce risk and avoid becoming a potential hazard to overtaking vehicles. In cities such as Brisbane, bikeway infrastructure remains fragmented. While efforts to expand bikeways are ongoing, many fail to connect safely or directly. For example: The Kedron Brook bikeway to Woolloowin bikeway connection currently requires the use of a busway overpass, followed by a route through backstreets and roads. Roma Street Parklands is connected to the Centennial bikeway via a steep road. These disconnections undermine safety and usability. Additionally, portions of existing bikeways are poorly maintained, further discouraging regular use. If safety is a priority, increased investment in continuous, well-maintained, and separated bikeway infrastructure is essential.

E-bikes and PMDs represent a promising shift toward low-impact, efficient, and accessible urban mobility. The legislative environment should evolve to support this transition by ensuring regulations are consistent, practical, and focused on encouraging safe adoption. I urge the committee to consider the points above and adopt a more forward-thinking, evidence-based approach to the regulation of eBikes and eScooters.