

Submission to Queensland Parliamentary Enquiry into Motor Recreation Activities.

My name is Ramon Felstead. I am a [REDACTED] community resident, husband and father of 2 children aged 7 and 4.

My 7 year old son and I are passionate members of our local off road enduro motorcycle club, and enjoy riding petrol-powered dirt bikes as our chosen sport, whenever possible.

I am making this submission personally, as I am passionate about the sport and the health benefits it provides both physically and mentally.

My submission, is made in order to highlight the growing need for specific Electric Dirt Bike regulations, guidance and consideration for;

- Businesses offering electric only parks and tracks, electric only dirt bike hire, electric only dirt bike coaching
- Electric only clubs
- Electric only club tracks

I believe specific electric only guidance and regulations is required, due to the little or inaudible noise emissions, and the reduced impact on the environment, from electric dirt bikes, making use vastly different to petrol powered dirt bikes. The health benefits of dirt bike riding, particularly for mental health and wellness, can be extended to many with the emergence of electric dirt bikes.

The rise of electric dirt bikes has begun. Two leading dirt bike manufacturers KTM and Husqvarna, are now producing race ready childrens electric dirt bikes<sup>i</sup>. These are not like other electric 'toy bikes', they are designed to be competition ready, electric race dirt bikes. Oset are leading the way for childrens electric Trials bikes<sup>iii</sup>, and also offer adult versions. A Chinese manufacturer called Sur-ron is producing a very capable dirt bike called Light Bee<sup>iv</sup>, and have recently released a larger dirt bike called Storm Bee<sup>v</sup>. These are both teenager/ adult dirt bikes. Both are road registrable.

The main difference to traditional petrol powered bikes, is the low noise emissions. Electric dirt bikes are almost inaudible. Furthermore, there is the ability to program the bike for the rider's level of experience and skill with bikes such as the Gas Gas children's E10 & E12 dirt bike via smartphone app<sup>vi</sup>.

Other benefits of these machines is the fact they are not reliant on fossil fuels to run, they can be charged via a solar system, they have less working parts so are cheaper to run, and they have no emissions, making the environmental impact much lower than traditional petrol powered machines. If we are to look to a sustainable option for motorsports and recreation, this is the path.

On the surface this may not seem like any real difference, however when we look at the closure of tracks due to noise complaints, (such as Reedy Creek on the Gold Coast)<sup>vii</sup> and the decline in our sport largely due to urban sprawl, noise complaints and distance to travel to suitable tracks or parks, this is a very real and tangible difference. The opportunities that arise due to these low noise machines, and this continued advancement in technology are numerous. When we consider the fact that some local and easily accessible tracks are closing or having a difficult time with council such as the Mike Hatcher club in Labrador, Gold Coast (with noise complaints)<sup>viii</sup>, it is easy to start to envisage a potential reversal of these challenges to this sport.

Some of the many new and exciting opportunities include the potential to hold night meetings, or even indoor events as there are no emissions with electric powered machines. The industry could start to consider options around re opening old tracks, or creating new ones in better and more centralised locations. It's not difficult to envisage many new businesses operating in the electric only space. These innovative businesses will provide further employment opportunities for Queenslanders. The low noise machines give rise to potential business opportunities, businesses that provide a safe opportunity, to introduce dirt bike riding, coaching and schooling. These businesses will help to further the sport and ignite the passion. Coaching and schooling facilities could help to reduce the risks associated with unlawful riding and could further help to improve road riding safety, should riders choose to pursue this.

Living in the suburbs would no longer be a deterrent to purchasing, owning and using a 'dirt bike'. The changes will mean dirt bike riding, is no longer the sole domain of people who live in acreage or farms, or near to one of the few available city tracks. The distances required to travel to participate in the sport many love, will no longer be a deterrent should local neighbourhood parks open up. The sport will again start to thrive and children will find a passion they may not have had before. In the future, a dedicated electric dirt bike track/ park or facility such as I Motox<sup>ix</sup> in Glasgow, or E-nduro in the UK<sup>x</sup>, could potentially be a draw card for tourism. This will help contribute to the industry and help to grow the motor recreation tourism market.

Similar to a skate park, basketball court and bike track, any investment in electric only parks, would support further sport and recreation for our youth. This will further help to combat crime, anti social behaviour, alleviate boredom, increase physical exercise, increase family and community connections and help combat mental and other health issues. Dr Martin (2010)<sup>xi</sup> identifies in her article, the positive benefits of increased sport and recreation on children's physical and mental health, which are now well known. Further to this, children need to be able to take risks, and the electric, smart phone controlled dirt bike allows this, in a controlled environment. Eager and Little (2011)<sup>xii</sup> describe a risk-deprived child as more prone to problems such as obesity, mental health concerns, lack of independence, and a decrease in learning, perception and judgment skills.

Risk taking in young people, particularly boys, and even more so those diagnosed with ADHD are prevalent. Many dirt bike riders and bicycle riders

share a common understanding of the benefits to their mental clarity from riding, myself included. Having been diagnosed with ADHD as an adult, along with my 7 year old son, I appreciate first hand the importance riding dirt bikes has had on my own mental health. I have lived through the challenges associated with mental ill health, and have found the thrill, risks and physicality of riding a dirt bike, helps to clear the mind and raise the spirit. As a child, I would use my dirt bike as an outlet, particularly when I was feeling frustrated or had challenging emotions. It is a dream of mine to offer this therapeutic outlet to other children.

Programs such as outrides, riding for focus<sup>xiii</sup> (sponsored by Bicycle company Specialized<sup>xv</sup>) could be adapted to suit electric dirt bikes. This program is designed to get more children, particularly those with ADHD, into physical activity before and after school. These programs, combined with fact based evidence, show that a 'single biking session significantly improved measures of executive attention in ADHD subjects' (Kennedy / Wilson, 2013)<sup>xv</sup>. Further to this, the study also 'shows there was an increase in the participant's ability to understand their own feelings after biking for all ADHD groups'. Perhaps children could partake in a morning, electric dirt bike ride before school, and would likely want to, simply because it is fun. The benefits of increased physical activity on schoolwork are also well known as highlighted by Martin (2010), some research indicates that increased participation in physical activity leads to enhanced learning and better grades.<sup>xvi</sup> This sport would be an appealing and engaging physical activity for many young children and teenagers as it contains an element of managed risk and control.

I believe special consideration should be made for low noise, electric dirt bikes, particularly around clubs and club activities, and also for innovative entrepreneurs. Many say electric bikes are the way of the future, however this is already occurring in Europe and Australia will soon follow. Many of Australia's most famous riders are from Queensland, we need specific regulations and guidance now, if we are to maximise the potential of this new technology and keep our sport thriving in this state.

I am more than happy to be further involved in this discussion and process if requested.

Kind regards



Ramon Felstead

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- i <https://www.ktm.com/en/mx/sx-e-5/>
- ii <https://www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com/en/motocross/ee-5/>
- iii <https://osetbikes.com/au/bikes/>
- iv <https://www.surronaustralia.com.au>
- v <https://electrek.co/2019/11/07/sur-ron-storm-bee-electric-motorcycle-eicma/>
- vi <https://gasmotorcycles.com.au/range/kids-bikes/>
- vii <http://www.goldcoastmotocrossclub.com.au/index.php/gold-coast-motocross-club-news>
- viii <https://www.goldcoastbulletin.com.au/news/gold-coast/council-bans-senior-riders-from-mike-hatcher-speedway-after-complaints/news-story/b6ca92198efcd1c0d1c1dd6e9d980ce5>
- ix <https://i-motox.com>
- x <https://www.e-scape.co/about>
- xi Dr Karen Martin, Brain Boost: Sport and Physical activity enhance children's learning. 2010
- xii Eager D., Little H. Risk Deficit Disorder; Proceeding of IPWEA International Public Works Conference; Canberra, Australia. 21–24 August 2011.
- xiii <https://outridebike.org/ridingforfocus>
- xiv <https://www.specialized.com/au/en>
- xv Wilson / Kennedy, ADHD Bike Program final report. 2013
- xvi Dr Karen Martin, Brain Boost: Sport and Physical activity enhance children's learning. 2010