

**Submission
No 2**

**INQUIRY INTO USE OF E-SCOOTERS, E-BIKES AND
RELATED MOBILITY OPTIONS**

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I have been riding ebikes in NSW for over 10 years. I own three ebikes for different applications and my riding includes on-road daily commuting, mountain biking and overnight touring. Although the law would allow me to hold a drivers licence I choose not to due to my disability, primarily for the safety of others. As a result, ebikes are my only form of personal transport, and the advent of ebikes has transformed my daily freedom. I am a qualified electrical engineer and so have some insight into the design issues around ebike systems.

Ebikes dramatically increase the take-up of cycling as a mode of transport in the general community. As they require less fitness, people are more likely to use them as compared to traditional bicycles, but still gain some health benefits since they still require the user to pedal and provide the primary source of propulsion. They help significantly in reducing the use of cars and hence reduce congestion and parking issues.

These benefits demand that government do everything in their power to encourage and support the use of ebikes in the community. Currently there are several issues that need to be addressed.

Firstly, the inconsistency between states' legislation needs to be rectified. The current differences between each state's legislation means that importers and retailers face challenges in attempting to remain fully legal in what they sell in each jurisdiction. A consistent approach would mean that the importation rules would be aligned with state rules. Australia would be a market where manufacturers can standardise on bike settings for the whole nation – important when we are already such a small market and will require ebike configurations that are unique.

NSW has a world-unique standard at present which is actually superior to the other Australian states. This is due to the higher power limit in NSW which is 500W. This higher power limit is important for ebikes to become practical as cargo bikes, and goes some way to making them realistic as a mode of transport for carrying goods, especially in hilly areas like Sydney. It would also be advantageous to implement a still-higher power limit for commercial users (such as Australia Post) which could require registration (to help offset other costs such as bicycle infrastructure builds). It is important however that such registration not impose overly-onerous bureaucracy on manufacturers if we want to encourage a wide range of ebikes to be available. Ideally, this registration would simply allow tracking of ebikes and their ownership, enhancing the enforcement of road rules.

Thirdly is the issue of speed limiting. The current limit of 25km/hr at which motor assistance must cut out is too low. Regular cyclists travel typically around 30km/hr and if we are to encourage the uptake of ebikes as commuting alternatives a speed limit of 32km/hr (as is the standard in most of the USA) would be far more appropriate. Currently there are a large number of illegal ebikes being ridden in NSW which exceed the 25km/hr speed limit. This is largely driven by the frustration of the 25km/hr limit being too slow. By adopting a more realistic speed limit the vast majority of users would be happy to adopt legal ebikes, effectively wiping out the trade in illegal ebike sales.

Lastly, the conflict between pedestrians and ebike riders has become a hot topic of late. Unfortunately most bicycle infrastructure in NSW has been shared paths for both pedestrians and cyclists. This has led to a feeling of trepidation for many pedestrians. The solution to this issue is two-fold. Firstly, future infrastructure should focus on separating pedestrians and cyclists. This is the norm in much of Europe. Secondly, education is key for both ebike riders and pedestrians on shared-path etiquette. Young riders particularly need more education about both the road rules and how to ride respectfully on shared paths.

In summary these are the main points I would like to make in regards to ebike legislation in NSW:

- Actively work with the other states to produce a national standard for ebikes
- Maintain the 500W power limit for unregistered ebikes, and introduce a higher power limit for registered ebikes
- Increase the speed limit for motor assistance to 32km/hr
- Aim to separate pedestrians and cyclists in future bike path infrastructure planning
- Increase education through campaigns for both pedestrians and cyclists, particularly for young riders

Mark Harwood