

**Submission
No 77**

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

Organisation: Khancoban Adventures Pty ltd

Date Received: 16 July 2024



KOSCIUSZKO BASE CAMP

High Country Cabins

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Ref: Inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and related mobility options

Dear Inquiry Members

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to your inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and related mobility options, for consideration.

As a brief background, we are a small tourism and accommodation business located at the entrance to the beautiful Kosciuszko National Park in NSW. Currently we provide our guests with self-contained accommodation and information on local trails, day trips and adventures, fly fishing guiding and hiking maps. We also provide out full fee paying guests with complimentary e-bikes so that they can enjoy our beautiful area at their leisure.

We started providing complimentary e-bikes based on the popularity of this service in similar tourism markets such as Canada and New Zealand, where e-biking, e-bike and e-scooter tours and trails are the fastest growing adventure tourism markets.

Traditionally the rapidly growing global adventure tourism market, currently \$461 billion annually and expected to grow to \$2.6 trillion by 2033 based on current growth. Australia's share of this market was around \$32 billion in 2023 growing at 16% annually.

The adventure tourism market is divided into hard adventures – mountain biking, scuba diving, hang gliding, white water rafting etc and soft adventures – easy path hiking, boat tours, safari style tours, camping etc. Soft Adventure tourism is a much larger market segment with 75% of the market.

The hard adventure tourism market in Australia is not experiencing the same growth due to the constraints imposed by insurance costs and this is where opening Australia to a third option, "medium" adventure tourism offers huge opportunity. A medium adventure involves the experience part of a hard adventure but the reduced risk and less strenuous exercise components of the soft tourism market. This would include e-bikes, e-scooters, e-surfboards and e-all terrain scooters.

E-bikes

The emergence of electric powered sporting equipment such as e-bikes, has seen a rapid rise in experiential tourism like rail trails, multi day rides and long gravel trail riding which would fit this idea of medium adventure. Our local experience through arranging and facilitating trail rides through the Lifecycle Upper Murray Club has seen a significant rise in participation. Once we were able to provide riders access to e-bikes this opened up this experience to a much wider age group and ability levels and involves much less maintenance and risk than mountain biking. In other markets eg North America, NZ and in Europe there is a rapid rise in accommodation, transfers and food and beverage businesses who are benefiting from certainty around the legislation for use of e-bikes and reduced restrictions on the types of e-bikes on multi day and trail long trail riding.



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The e-bike market is currently hindered by insurers not being engaged with this rapidly emerging segment of cycling due to current legal uncertainty and lack of research and there are very few insurance products available to those hiring e -bikes or arranging tours. The insurance products that are currently available are prohibitively expensive and restrictive, and insurers openly admit they have not developed the right products yet for e-bikes. E-bikes and e-bike tours are far more advanced in other adventure tourism markets around the world and Australia is lagging significantly due to current restrictions in the types of bikes permitted and battery size etc.

E - Scooters

The other experiential tourism market that is rapidly expanding in other countries is e-scooters (of all types), e-scooters can be designed for urban paved environments, gravel trails, off road or all terrain 4wd models. Australia's view on e-scooters including NSW e-scooter trial has been very biased towards evaluating the business model of mass urban rental fleets as opposed to trialing the use of e-scooters in general as a means of transport and recreation.

Many of the problems encountered in the urban e-scooter trials are due to the fact that only one market segment, the mass rental e-scooter model, is being viewed as representative of the use of e-scooters. The issues involving accidents between inexperienced e-scooter riders and pedestrians, people riding without helmets, traffic injuries etc are particular to this business model and not representative of the use of private or managed rental of e-scooters.

Riding an e-scooter is very safe means of transport particularly away from traffic. It involves far less balance than bicycles and is ridden much closer to the ground allowing a rider to just "step off" rather than fall. Because e-scooters do not require the rider to push with one leg like a traditional scooter they are far easier to ride and their upright positioning of the rider gives a much better field of vision than bicycles. E-scooters are widely used in urban areas in countries world-wide and most riders are using their own e-scooter not a short term rental.

The legislative approval for e-scooters and other forms of electric transport is hindering Australia's uptake of this rapidly growing global market. It does not seem reasonable that it is permissible to drive a high speed, 4 wheel drive, combustion engine motor vehicle or motor bike on a national park trail or road but you cannot ride a slower, safer, quieter e-scooter.

There are no restrictions on children of any age riding bicycles on the road, there are no licensing requirements other than compulsory helmet use. Bicycles, particularly at low speeds are far less stable, have greater braking distances, reduced field of visibility and pose a much greater safety risk than a scooter. Far safer again is a 4 wheel, all terrain e- scooter, that is rapidly becoming the transport of choice for many tourism and guiding companies due to their excellent safety capabilities. Yet in Australia there is currently no type of license or vehicle classification that lets you ride one of these on any public road. These will be the future of personal and holiday transport from urban commuters, golf courses to board walks and gravel tracks due to their stability, ability to carry equipment and braking and control capability.



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The whole field of electric powered vehicles, sports and mobility equipment is being developed and improved very quickly and Australia is still at the starting blocks, and we are being left behind. It is inevitable that our personal transport is about to be very different as the various e-equipment is developed and Australia needs to be a leader in the uptake of these markets not lagging the world.

It is very positive step that this inquiry is taking place and there are many recommendations that could assist in the uptake of this new world of transport. There could be a licensing requirement, age limits, there could be restrictions on what roads they can be used on, speeds on footpaths and pedestrian areas. But it would be most helpful if the use of e-bikes and e-scooters (of all types) for personal ownership and use, could be evaluated separately to the urban mass rental business model that has many issues unrelated to the responsible use of e scooters and other recreational equipment.

Please see the following photos that demonstrate the innovations and potential of this market.

