

**Submission
No 106**

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

Organisation: Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (NSW & ACT)
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NSW & ACT

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9 August 2024

Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC
Committee Chair
Portfolio Committee No. 6
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

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Dear Ms Faehrmann,

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

I write with reference to the Inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes, and related mobility options.

As you are aware, the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (NSW & ACT) (“the Institute”), has a long history of engaging with government on matters relating to road safety, noting that the Institute represents a significant number of engineers who are responsible for the management of 80 percent of the state’s roads as well as footpaths, bike lanes and cycleways.

Introduction

The evolution of all modes of transport has meant that mankind must accept the progress made when new forms appear. Governments do not have the luxury, or indeed the moral right, to oppose cheap, reliable and efficient ways of travel when the engineering fraternity presents them. In recent years the use of electronic forms of transport have become more popular with economies of scale meaning they have become increasingly cost efficient. Furthermore, Governments have embraced and encouraged the introduction of electric cars, buses, ferries and even aircraft. To deny the general public access to personal electric transport opportunities would be inconsistent with their own behaviour.

To that end, the Institute believes all three tiers of Government now need to prepare for an increase in the use of e-scooters and e-bikes. This will not simply be because of the popular move towards zero emissions, but also because they are being seen as a low cost and convenient mode of transport. Furthermore, the significant growth in personal services such as home deliveries and on-line shopping orders have seen this form of transport become a popular option in the ‘gig’ economy.

Consideration

Earlier this year, and in preparation for the anticipated growth in electronic personal transportation, the Mayor of New York City, Eric Adams, worked with the Commissioner of Transport to launch a campaign designed to educate riders and pedestrians on how to “Get Smart Before You Start”. This campaign was designed to ensure the public were aware of their legal obligations noting the size and speed of their carriage as well as safety messages and guidance on the storage and use of lithium batteries. The City of New York has published these guidelines on www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/bicyclists/ebikes.shtml and the Institute commends this to the Inquiry, noting, however, that US regulations regarding the wearing of helmets are much more liberal than New South Wales and the Institute does not endorse the watering down of these rules in any way.

The Institute also acknowledges the work that has been done across Australian jurisdictions to address safety concerns raised in relation to the proliferation of e-bikes and e-scooters. This is in response to the corresponding increase in injuries associated with the use of such devices, with the Jamieson Trauma Institute noting an 84 percent increase in e-scooter related presentations at Queensland hospitals from 2021 – 2023. The Victorian Government have announced that new regulations to manage the use of e-scooters will be released in 2025, outlining the provisions of use of such devices, along with accompanying mandatory safety measures. Several NSW councils have also begun addressing these issues at a local level, with Northern Beaches Council developing an ‘e-bike code’ to increase pedestrian and rider safety, with a particular focus on younger riders of such devices. The Institute recognises the initiative that has been taken by these jurisdictions to address issues related to the safe use of e-bikes and e-scooters, but also notes the need for a set of consistent rules and regulations to be applied across all state and local government areas to provide certainty to users and community members.

The Institute believes the following considerations should be made:

1. Age limits be applied to the use of electronic personal transportation similar to the New York City practice with police given powers to enforce compliance.
2. A brief on-line safety test be mandatory for anyone wishing to use e-bikes or e-scooters and linked to their Service NSW account.
3. Speed limits on bike lanes be set with consideration of the speed of conventional bicycles with police given the powers to enforce compliance.
4. E-scooters be restricted to bike lanes and cycle ways when bike lanes and cycle ways are available.
5. The sale or transfer of any vehicle with lithium batteries be conditional on a safety inspection to ensure the batteries have not been unsafely modified.
6. Mandate the return of rental and loan bikes after use.
7. Government commits to an ongoing review of available lanes for both e-bikes and e-scooters, including a focus on creating additional separated shared paths and cycleways.
8. Work with other Australian jurisdictions to develop consistent national regulations for e-bike and e-scooter use and enforcement.

Conclusion

The Institute commends the Committee for bringing forward public debate on policies and procedures surrounding the use of electronic personal transportation and is keen to assist in making sure all three tiers of government adopt best practise when considering regulation and legislation government use.



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If you have any further questions regarding our submission, please do not hesitate to contact the Institute. We would welcome any opportunity to appear before a Parliamentary Hearing regarding this matter.

Yours sincerely,

The Honourable David Elliott
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Mr Joshua Devitt
CHIEF ENGINEER