

**Submission
No 130**

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

Organisation: National Heart Foundation of Australia

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

The Heart Foundation welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and related mobility options. In 2022, more than 15,200 people in New South Wales died from cardiovascular disease¹. The Heart Foundation is Australia's trusted for-purpose organisation working to improve heart disease prevention, detection, and support for all people living in Australia. Cardiovascular disease is the cause of 1 in 4 of all deaths in Australia, with more than half of the population having 3 or more key risk factors for cardiovascular disease². Physical inactivity remains a major health issue and is calculated to cost Australia \$2.4 billion each year in additional health costs alone³. Most cardiovascular disease risk factors are preventable through a healthy lifestyle, including a healthy diet, regular exercise and maintaining a healthy weight. In 2023, 35% of those aged 16 years and over were insufficiently physically active in NSW⁴, and 58% of adults were overweight or obese⁵, placing them at increased risk of cardiovascular disease and a range of other chronic diseases.

The built and natural environments, together with transport mode choice, can play a significant role in helping people engage in regular physical activity, reducing their risk of developing cardiovascular disease. E-mobility options such as e-bikes can extend the distances that users can travel without a car and can be viable options to replace motorised vehicle use for completing short trips that make up half of all daily trips in Australia⁶. When used to replace motorised vehicles, the use of e-bikes can deliver health and community benefits through increased physical activity in users⁷.

The Heart Foundation will respond to the points below in the terms of reference:

(c) local council, industry and stakeholder perspectives on the utilisation and impact of e-mobility devices in the community;

(d) opportunities to improve mobility, the customer experience, safety for users and the community;

(f) the extent that e-mobility devices have positive community benefits such as encouraging mode shift, relieving congestion, addressing social disadvantage and tourism.

Summary of recommendations

- 1. Priority should be given to e-mobility options that facilitate active transport.**
- 2. Increases in e-mobility use must be matched with increases in infrastructure to maintain the safety of pedestrians.**
- 3. Regulations regarding the use of e-mobility devices should be clearly communicated to communities and enforced by relevant authorities.**
- 4. E-bike sharing systems should be available in areas outside of metropolitan Sydney.**

(c) local council, industry and stakeholder perspectives on the utilisation and impact of e-mobility devices in the community.

The increased use of e-bikes has the potential to assist people to meet recommended daily physical activity levels and maintain a healthy weight⁷. In NSW, 389,600 people had heart, stroke and vascular disease in 2022, with prevalence increasing from 3.9% in 2001, to 4.8% in 2022.⁸ More than half of the adult population and 1 in 5 children are above a healthy weight⁵ and 35% of adults are insufficiently physically active⁴. Physical activity levels and living above a healthy weight are key modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular disease and a number of chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes and certain cancers⁹.

Recommendation 1 - Priority should be given to e-mobility options that facilitate active transport.

In principle, the Heart Foundation is supportive of efforts to increase the use of e-bikes as they can assist people to increase their levels of moderate physical activity¹⁰. E-cycling has been shown to elicit moderate levels of physical activity, lower than that which is elicited during conventional cycling, however higher than walking¹¹. E-cycling also has the potential to encourage increased physical activity levels as it assists to overcome some of the barriers associated with conventional cycling, such as difficulty cycling uphill; fear of cycle distance; sweating and the need for change facilities⁶. E-cycling options may also assist in encouraging multi-modal transport options, helping individuals to actively travel the first and last sections of their journeys.⁸

As e-bikes require less aerobic effort to use than conventional bikes, they can assist in encouraging older populations, people who are above a healthy weight, those with health-related limitations, and those who are not currently exercising regularly, to take more active forms of transport than driving¹². E-scooters, while allowing for low cost and more sustainable mobility, have not shown to provide significant fitness benefits, especially if they are used as a replacement for walking or cycling¹³. E-scooters rely entirely on motorised transport, and do not require a level of physical activity to operate.

(d) opportunities to improve mobility, the customer experience, safety for users and the community

Recommendation 2 – Increases in e-mobility use must be matched with increases in infrastructure to maintain the safety of pedestrians and ensure the safety of e-bike users.

Conflicts and crashes between e-mobility users and pedestrians have been shown to occur in greater numbers with increasing use of e-mobility options in high foot traffic areas¹⁴. Pedestrians are often exposed to higher injury risks than e-mobility users, which can lead to hesitancy of local communities to accept increased numbers of e-mobility options in their locations. It is vital that any increase in the availability of e-mobility options coincides with increases in infrastructure such as bike lanes, bike parking and lighting. This will help to ensure that pedestrian's perceptions of safety are not affected with increased number of e-bike users in their communities.

The safety of potential e-bike users is also imperative to encourage more people to take more active transport options in replacement of vehicles. A study of almost 4,000 people across all 37 local government

areas of Metropolitan Melbourne found that most people (78%), were interested in riding a bike, but only when protected infrastructure is provided¹⁵. Other studies have highlighted that overall, e-cycling is more common in men than women, a similar pattern to conventional cycling. However, in countries with high levels of cycling and safe cycling infrastructure, such as the Netherlands and Denmark, the mode share of cycling is higher in women than men¹⁶.

Recommendation 3 – Regulations regarding the use of e-mobility devices should be clearly communicated to communities and enforced by relevant authorities.

It is also important that measures such as traffic laws and regulations for e-mobility use are clearly communicated with users and enforced by relevant authorities. Increased use of e-mobility options has the potential to increase pedestrians collisions and injuries if e-mobility users are required to share areas normally designated for walking. Concerns from pedestrians regarding their safety when sharing areas with e-mobility users can result in pushback from local communities as well as discouraging walking in certain areas due to fears around the dangers of e-mobility options.

It is important that any plans to increase the use of e-mobility options includes communication plans for local communities to understand the relevant restrictions on their use. Communities should be informed of the locations where e-mobility users are permitted to use footpaths and where they are required to ride on the road or in bike lanes. It is also recommended that these regulations are enforced by the relevant authorities to discourage any antisocial behaviours and illegal use of e-mobility options.

(f) the extent that e-mobility devices have positive community benefits such as encouraging mode shift, relieving congestion, addressing social disadvantage and tourism.

E-micromobility devices, such as e-bikes, have the potential to encourage a significant mode shift away from traditional car use, particularly for short trips under 5km. In Sydney, more than 2 million car trips annually are less than 2km¹⁷. This represents a substantial opportunity for e-micromobility to replace car trips and deliver positive community benefits, particularly for cardiovascular health.

Research findings from the Australian cycling and e-scooter economy report further support the notion that e-micromobility devices are facilitating a mode shift¹⁸. The report reveals that in 2022, a significant proportion of the Australian adult population engaged in cycling and e-scooter use, with higher usage reported among younger individuals aged 18-34 years¹³. As mentioned previously, the shift to e-bikes has the potential to promote the switch to more active forms of transport as a replacement for vehicle use, particularly on short trips with associated benefits for cardiovascular health. We will continue to note e-bikes as the preferred mode of choice to support physical activity as e-scooters do not provide the same health benefits.

Recommendation 4 – E-bike sharing systems should be available in areas outside of metropolitan Sydney.

E-bike sharing platforms can also facilitate mode shift from vehicles to cycling by removing the initial upfront cost barrier of e-bikes. To ensure that the benefits of shared e-bikes are available to more of the



population, the Government of NSW should work with private providers and local councils to promote their uptake in suburban and regional areas. This should include community awareness campaigns, and infrastructure for e-bike and bike parking to encourage community movement towards safe and accepted e-mobility.

The increased use of e-bikes has the potential to encourage people to replace car trips with more active modes of transport, helping residents in our state to increase their physical activity levels, and reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease. The Heart Foundation would welcome the opportunity to discuss our position and recommendations further with you during public hearings.

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