

**Submission
No 150**

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

Organisation: Wollondilly Shire Council

Date Received: 16 August 2024

Director
Portfolio Committee No. 6
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

16 August 2024

Dear Portfolio Committee No. 6,

WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL SUBMISSION INTO INQUIRY INTO THE USE OF E-SCOOTERS, E-BIKES AND RELATED MOBILITY OPTIONS

Wollondilly is a peri-urban region in the South Western Sydney, home to historical villages, scenic rivers, and vast natural landscapes. Our community has a growing population, and we are seeing new developments with emerging active transport solutions is a priority for our Council.

Active Transport Solutions with E-mobility

One clear solution to addressing our transport challenges is to embrace enhanced active transport options, particularly through electric-powered alternatives like e-scooters and e-bikes. These electrified devices make active transport more feasible for our residents, given the distances between key locations and the hilly terrain of Wollondilly. E-mobility options provide residents with a convenient way to commute between our dispersed towns, access public transport links, and explore the area's natural beauty, while also relieving congestion on our roads.

For tourists, e-scooters and e-bikes offer an easy and sustainable way to experience Wollondilly's attractions. By promoting these modes of transport, we hope to encourage more eco-friendly tourism, which will not only boost the local economy but also reduce the environmental impact of traditional tourism-related travel.

Safety Concerns and the Importance of Infrastructure

However, while e-mobility devices offer clear benefits, ensuring the safety of all users—whether they are engaging in active transport, walking as pedestrians, or driving—is a significant concern. The small wheels of e-scooters, in particular, make them vulnerable to surface irregularities, potholes, and uneven pavements.

Without the right infrastructure in place, these devices could present serious risks to riders and other road users.

To address these challenges, Wollondilly Shire Council is proposing the following infrastructure improvements:

- Wider and better-separated shared pathways to provide safer spaces for e-scooters, e-bikes, pedestrians, and vehicles. These pathways would be adequately spaced from moving traffic and offer enough width for users to pass safely without posing risks to others.
- Upgraded surfaces on shared pathways to minimize the risks posed by rough or uneven terrain. These improvements would make pathways safer for e-mobility users, particularly e-scooter riders, whose small wheels can make navigating irregular surfaces more difficult.
- Traffic-calming measures and better separation at key intersections to ensure smooth and safe crossings for all transport users.
- Dedicated e-mobility lanes in higher-traffic areas to minimize interactions between e-scooter/e-bike riders and pedestrians, reducing the likelihood of collisions.

Regulating Speed and Enforcing Safety

In addition to infrastructure, regulating speed limits in areas shared with pedestrians will be crucial. E-scooters and e-bikes, though offering flexible transport solutions, can pose safety risks when operated at high speeds. We recommend enforcing strict speed limits in shared zones and public spaces to ensure slower, more controlled movement, particularly in pedestrian-heavy areas.

E-scooters, with their small wheels and vulnerability to uneven surfaces, particularly benefit from such regulations. Helmets should also be mandatory for all e-scooter and e-bike riders to reduce injury risk in the event of a fall or accident.

While e-bikes are generally limited to 25kph, there have been instances of young individuals riding them at much higher speeds without pedalling. This raises important questions about the classification of these devices and whether certain e-bikes should be registered or restricted from shared pathways to ensure the safety of all users.

Benefits for Residents and Tourists

For residents, e-mobility provides an accessible solution to the challenges posed by our region's spread-out nature and varied terrain. Our region is home to sprawling new developments (Wilton, Appin, and other growing communities) and historical villages (Picton, Tahmoor, Bargo and more) that are spread across a wide area. E-scooters and e-bikes provide a convenient, sustainable way for residents to travel between these areas, or travel to nearest public transport

station, without relying on cars, which contributes to reducing congestion on our roads.

From a tourism perspective, e-mobility has the potential to transform the visitor experience in Wollondilly. Our region's historical villages, scenic mountains, and natural rivers attract tourists year-round, and e-scooters and e-bikes would offer a convenient, eco-friendly way for visitors to explore these sites without adding to road congestion. With the right infrastructure in place, Wollondilly could position itself as a leader in sustainable tourism, allowing visitors to enjoy our natural beauty while reducing their carbon footprint.

A Collaborative Approach

As part of our efforts, we believe that collaboration between local, state, and federal governments is essential to ensure the successful integration of e-mobility devices into our transport system. Local councils like ours are in a unique position to identify and implement the necessary infrastructure, while state and federal governments can provide regulatory frameworks and funding support.

We also recognise the importance of community and industry perspectives in shaping how these devices are used. Consulting with local residents, businesses, and key stakeholders will allow us to refine our approach and ensure that it is tailored to the needs of Wollondilly.

Wollondilly Shire Council is committed to fostering a transport system that supports active transport, reduces congestion, and improves connectivity across our region. By introducing e-scooters and e-bikes as part of this strategy, we can enhance mobility for both residents and tourists, while ensuring the necessary infrastructure and regulations are in place to protect everyone's safety.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide further evidence or present at any future hearings on this matter.

Thank you for considering our application, and we look forward to working together to implement this important initiative.

Yours faithfully,

Mike Nelson
Manager Assets, Transport and Engineering
Shire Futures