

**Submission
No 176**

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

Organisation: MidCoast Council

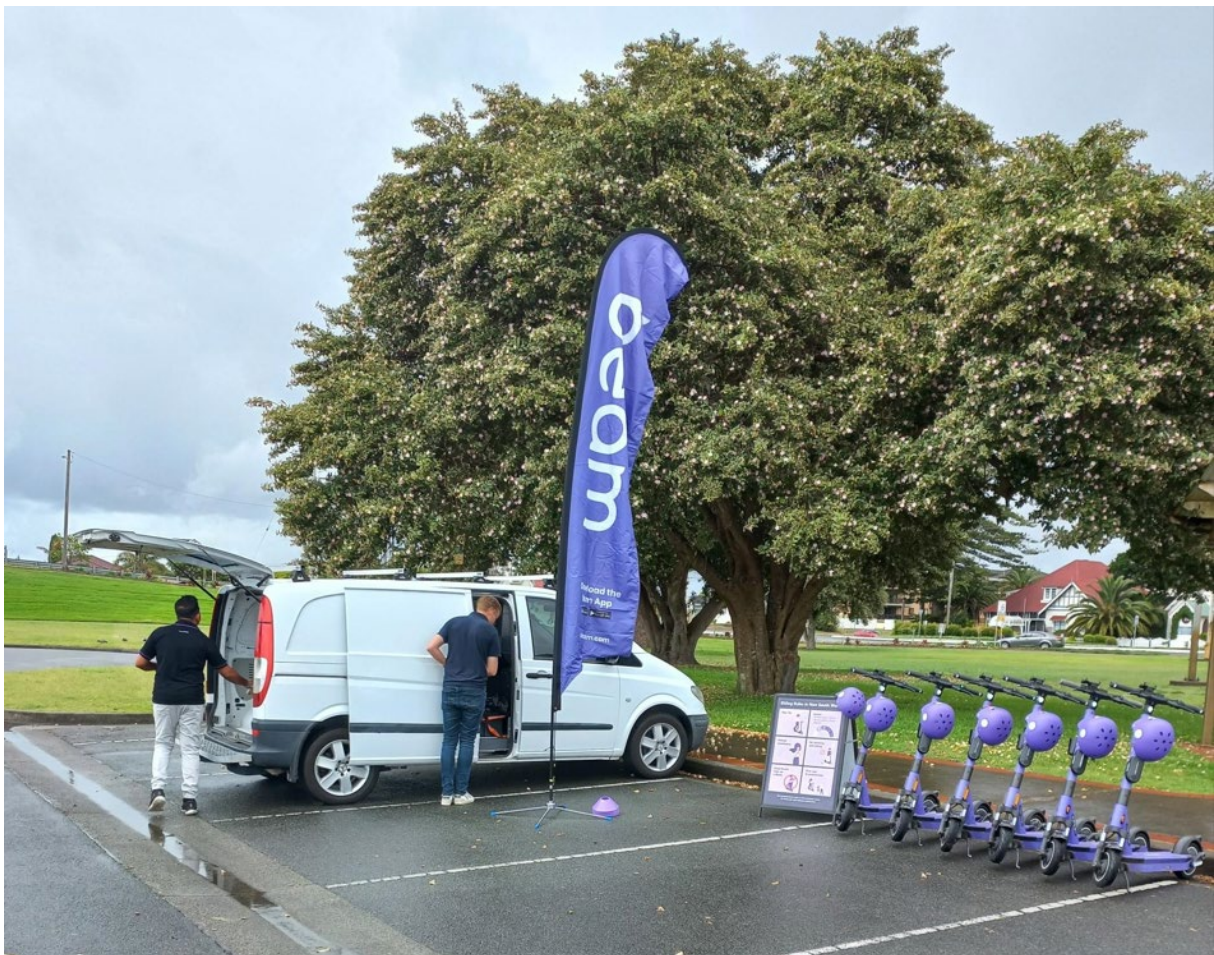
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MidCoast Council

Submission to

Legislative Council

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



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Introduction

Parliament of New South Wales Legislative Council is holding an “Inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and related mobility options”.

The terms of reference are:



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 – TRANSPORT AND THE ARTS

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

TERMS OF REFERENCE

That Portfolio Committee No. 6 - Transport and the Arts inquire into and report on the use of e-scooters, e-bikes (including shared schemes), related mobility options, and in particular:

- (a) the current and anticipated role of all three levels of government in enabling and encouraging safe electrified active transport options
- (b) opportunities to reform the regulatory framework to achieve better and safe outcomes for riders and the community
- (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
- (e) the potential benefits and risks of existing regulatory and policy settings, including the *Roads Act 1993*, Road Rules and Road User Space Allocation Policy and other related legislation regarding safety, traffic, and personal convenience
- (f) the extent that e-mobility devices have positive community benefits such as encouraging mode shift, relieving congestion, addressing social disadvantage and tourism
- (g) opportunities across government to improve outcomes in regard to e-scooters, e-bikes, and related mobility options
- (h) best practice in other Australian and international jurisdictions
- (i) the economic analysis of e-mobility contribution to safe transport at night for shift workers and women, to mode shift and to first and last mile transport, and
- (j) any other related matters.

This is MidCoast Council’s submission to this inquiry and the focus will be on our experience holding a Hire E-scooter Trial in Forster and Tuncurry for the last nine months.

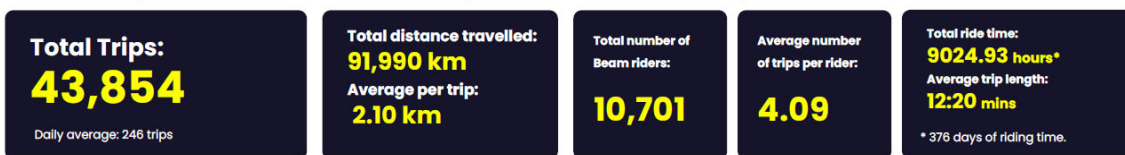
Transport for NSW has established an hire e-scooter trial program for NSW and they have invited Councils in participating to hold trial hire e-scooter in their local areas. We were successful in in gaining TfNSW approval for a hire e-scooter trial for Forster and Tuncurry towns in conjunction with the operator Beam Rides. Beam commenced the hire e-scooter trial on Friday 8 December 2023 with 150 scooters.

The trial has been considered to be successful so far with the e-scooter usage and further information on the attached Beam presentation to Council in June 2024. There has been opposition to the e-scooters from some residents particularly in the first couple months mainly around them being dangerous, improper use and discarded scooters.

These are extracts from Beam’s scooter usage report.

Total Usage

Data is for all trips between 8 December 2023 – Sunday 02 June 2024 (25 weeks & 2 days)



Usage listed into school terms and holiday periods

(Note dates are MM/DD/YYYY)

We have split out ridership trends in school holiday periods to compare usage:

Period	Date Range	Average Trips (per day)	Average Distance (km)	Average Ride Time (mins)
Term 4 (2023)	12/11/2023 - 12/17/2023	338	2.23	13:44
Summer Holidays	12/18/2023 - 01/28/2024	498	2.03	12:52
Term 1 (2024)	01/29/2024 - 04/14/2024	178	1.93	11:18
Autumn Holidays	04/15/2024 - 04/28/2024	186	2.12	12:30
Term 2 (2024)	04/29/2024 - 06/02/2024	75	3.28	10:32

Detailed Information on Usage

Other High Use Periods:

- New Years Eve (1 day): **1,221** trips
- Christmas Eve (1 day): **791** tips
- Friday after launch (1 day): **786** trips
- Australia Day weekend (3 days): **2,013** trips
- Easter long weekend (4 days): **1,599** trips

Average Usage over time:

- Warmer months (non holiday) ~ 1,250 trips p/w
- Cooler months (non holiday) ~ 525 trips p/w

Correspondence to Council on the Trial with Numbers per Month

Correspondence Opposing or Complaints about Trial During First Six Months	
Month	Number
1 st (8/12 to 7/1)	13
2 nd (8/1 to 7/2)	3
3 rd (8/2 to 7/3)	2
4 th (8/3 to 7/4)	4
5 th (8/4 to 7/5)	4
6 th (8/5 to 7/6)	1

Council received an email in May from a resident supporting the trial with the request to have the area extended.



Terms of Reference for Inquiry

a) “the current and anticipated role of all three levels of government in enabling and encouraging safe electrified active transport options”

It is expected that all levels of government would coordinate together to ensure the best practices were employed to provide the optimum operations and safety of personal electrified transport such as e-scooter and e-bikes. These practices will need to be supported by effective legislation at all levels of government with the objective of having them as safe as possible. The community will need to have education programs to understand the legal obligations of these scooters and bikes with the goal of having them operate safely and provide benefits to the community. The education program needs to influence behavior in relation to use and parking of e-scooter and e-bikes to minimise adverse impacts on other road users.

Government should be setting the legislation for the standards of the e-scooters and e-bikes to guarantee they are of the highest quality with all the appropriate safety features. The most important safety feature on these scooters and bikes is electrical safety with the use of Lithium-ion batteries, especially with a number of privately owned vehicles catching fire while charging. It is noted many e-bikes and e-scooters available for purchase for private use are of low quality from overseas. While legislation has been passed in NSW (commencing February 2025) addressing standards concerning lithium-ion batteries, there must be consistency throughout the States and Territories

State governments are responsible for setting the regulations for the use of the e-scooters and e-bikes, either private or hire, on the road network with promotional campaigns on their safe use and operational limitations. State government would coordinate with local governments on the use of hire e-scooters or e-bike to meet the primary demands in the local areas being commuter, tourism or recreational or usually a mix of all three.

Local governments would manage the local use of these devices especially hire e-scooters or e-bikes in their designated areas with the operational requirements adjusted to suit the needs, such as parking areas at high attractors of public transport hubs or shopping centres. Council’s would be promoting the safe use locally with advertising and workshops as the flow on from the state wide advertising. Hire e-scooter and e-bike areas would need specific promotions to encourage their safe use, vehicles left safely when trips are completed and discouraging anti-social behavior with the hire vehicles.



b) “Opportunities to reform the regulatory framework to achieve better and safe outcomes for riders and the community”

There needs to be clearer and simpler rules on the use of e-scooters and e-bikes that match the same non-powered vehicles to remove confusion. This confusion is making the community oppose personal mobility solutions as it appears there are no rules and any rules are not enforced.

The ban of private e-scooters on the road network is not working as these scooters are everywhere and being used by all ages of the public. The largest group seen using them are the younger adults and teenagers as a cheap and convenient mode of transport. It is difficult to stop the use of private e-scooters when hire e-scooters are available in many towns and suburbs across NSW. The approval of private e-scooters would bring NSW in line with other states then the focus can be on promoting their safe use.

c) “local council, industry and stakeholder perspective on the utilisation and impact of e-mobility devices in the community”

MidCoast Council experience as one of the first areas in NSW to have a hire e-scooters trial including operating on the road network has shown:

- A high use by visitors and tourists to the towns of Forster and Tuncurry
- Provide an improved experience for visitors to the towns with a cheap and fun mode transport that can be shared by the family.
- The hire e-scooters are easy to use, convenient for sightseeing, flexible, inexpensive and fun activity.
- The number of trips and distanced travelled on the scooters as shown on the attached report supports their popularity by visitors and locals.
- An alternative to motor vehicle use during peak times when traffic and parking can make it difficult for residents to access the main centres for work or shopping. E-Scooter have allowed workers to use parking further away from their workplace whilst still being easily able to access their workplace and return to their vehicles use e-scooters.

There are a small number of residents that have complained to Council about the e-scooters being dangerous to pedestrians as they travel too fast and close to people on footpaths. The scooters being left around town waiting for their next use are seen by some as ugly and reducing the amenity of the towns. There are many riders that do not use helmets when using scooters either the hire e-scooters or illegal private ones that cause concern within the community, which is an area that is difficult to police.

It is noted at the time of writing this submission is the decision by Melbourne City Council to cancel contracts with hire e-scooter operators to remove them from their streets. It would appear to be a political outcome done quickly, especially when private e-scooters are allowed on Victoria’s road network. It would be positive if a procedure could be developed to allow full consultation with all stakeholders to avoid rushed decisions with overly political focus.



d) “opportunities to improve mobility, the customer experience, safety for uses and the community”

As discussed in the previous sections there are a number of ways to make improvements and they are:

- Make it easier for Councils to have hire e-scooters and e-bikes.
- Promotion of safe use of e-scooters and e-bikes.
- Develop policies and methods to reduce illegal and bad behaviour on e-scooters such as not wearing helmets, doubling up and anti social riding.
- Set standards for private e-scooter and e-bikes to reduce the occurrence of fires while charging.
 - Equipment meets certain standards.
 - Education program on fires starting from E-scooters and E-bikes.
- Provide grant funding enabling the construction of infrastructure associated with the e-scooters and e-bikes and allowing separation of pedestrians and cars from e-scooters and e-bikes.



e) “the potential benefits and risks existing regulatory and policy settings, including the *Roads Act 1993*, *Road Rules* and *Road User Space Allocation Policy* and other related legislation regarding safety, traffic, and personal convenience.”

The biggest policy and regulation issue is private e-scooters are not allowed on the roads. The ownership of private e-scooters is growing exponentially and shows no sign of slowing down. These private e-scooters are being used on the road network and it is impractical for the Police to try to stop their use on the roads.

The use of hire e-scooters on the road network has people assuming that private e-scooters are allowed to operate on the road as well. The use of private e-scooters should be approved for the road network with sensible rules and the promotion of safe use.

There is clearly a demand for these private e-scooters for travel on the roads and the state regulations should be adjusted to acknowledge this demand.

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

The Forster and Tuncurry Hire E-scooter Trial has shown:

- The greatest benefit is to tourism as it enhances the experiences visitors have to the twin towns. The usage data has confirmed this to be the biggest advantage from the trial.
- It has provided some commuters easier access to their workplace as they do not require a car parking space.
- Young people are the biggest user from the local community either for fun and shorts trips.

g) “opportunities across government to improve outcomes in regard to e-scooters, e-bikes, and related mobility options”

As discussed in the previous sections there are a number of ways to make improvements and they are:

- Allow private e-scooters to use the road network.
- Councils be authorised to approve have hire e-scooters and e-bikes.
- Promotion of safe use of e-scooters and e-bikes on the roads.
- Develop policies and methods to reduce illegal and bad behaviour on these devices.
- Set standards for private e-scooter and e-bikes to reduce the occurrence of fires while charging.
 - E-scooters and e-bikes meet strict standards.
 - Education program on fires starting from e-scooters and e-bikes.
- Provide grant funding enabling the construction of infrastructure associated with the e-scooters and e-bikes and allowing separation of pedestrians and cars from e-scooters and e-bikes.

h) “best practice in other Australian and international jurisdictions”

There should be a review of existing best practices in Australia and overseas to develop NSW Best Practice guidelines on e-scooter and e-bike operations for both hire and privately owned.



i) “the economic analysis of e-mobility contributions to safe transport at night for shift workers and women, to mode shift and to first and last mile transport”

There would be limited information in the MidCoast trial on the use of the hire e-scooter by shift workers as the majority would use cars for transport.

Anecdotally some hospitality workers have been using the hire E-scooters to and from work as they have late evening finishes and parking can be hard to find close to their work place. It is considered these numbers would be low but it does provide another option to these workers with the hire e-scooters.

Conclusion

The most important areas that need to be focused on in NSW are:

- Allow private e-scooters access to the road network.
- Make it easier for councils to approve hire e-scooters and e-bikes.
- Promotion of safe use of e-scooters and e-bikes.
- Develop policies and methods to reduce illegal and bad behaviour on E-scooters such as not wearing helmets, doubling up and anti social riding.
- Set standards for private E-scooter and E-bikes to reduce the occurrence of fires while charging.
- Fund and develop appropriate infrastructure to adequately separate pedestrians and motor vehicles from e-scooters and e-bikes where appropriate.
- Develop procedures for approving, adjusting and cancelling hire e-scooters and e-bikes operations that allows full consultation and reduces hasty decisions.

