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*Road Safety, Policy and Research
Department for Infrastructure and Transport
GPO Box 1533, Adelaide SA 5001*

By email: DIT.RoadSafety@sa.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Personal Mobility Device (PMD) Use in South Australia

Recommendations

- PMDs allowed in the public domain should be speed limited, ideally 12kmh on footpaths and 25kmh on roads. If a single speed is adopted, it should be 15kmh
- PMDs should be encouraged to use streets instead of footpaths on low-speed residential streets
- Bells should be compulsory for all PMDs
- A minimum standard of kickstand for shared e-scooters be specified, to minimize the problem of them falling over when parked
- A (preferably national) no-fault personal injury scheme should be instituted.
- Distinct PMD typologies, such as scooters, skateboards and one-wheel type devices, should be individually regulated.

Walking SA welcomes the State Government's review of the growing role of e-scooters and other small-wheeled electrically driven vehicles. The fact that scooters and skateboards can now be motorised has profoundly accelerated their use and their impact on our local footpaths. Walking SA has not formed a view on electrically driven personal mobility devices. We continue to assert that walking is the most sustainable and easiest of all mobility in our cities and that many of the trips taken by these devices would be better if walked. However, we recognise that sometimes PMDs replace car trips and can play a role in making public transport more viable.

Importantly, we have not seen independent credible research to assess how these conflicting outcomes are balanced.

We accept the popularity of these devices and that their use should be accommodated. If regulated sensibly, we believe that their impact on our streets could benefit the community. The need for such regulation is urgent. It will be much easier to create an appropriate regulatory regime while their use is in its infancy and dominated by shared mobility companies than it would be if private ownership was widespread, and expectations assumed.

The current experience in Adelaide is of the common use of shared e-scooters in the city and some inner suburban councils, and the rarer but increasing use of privately owned e-scooters and e-skateboards. (Segways are rarer still.) The Beam and Neuron e-scooters are regulated as part of their trials, and for the most part the users are relatively inexperienced and cautious. The speed limit

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of 15kmh, geo-fencing and the encouragement of considerate placement of the scooter when the trip is finished have minimized the potential problems in sharing footpaths, especially where footpaths are wide. Nevertheless, they can cause problems in suburbs where footpaths are narrow and the verge is contested space for outdoor dining, trees and other landscaping, seating, bus stops etc. It is common to see e-scooters that have fallen over.

Privately-owned e-scooters are not speed-limited, and their owners are much less cautious, (though typically more skilled). While they are not left to clutter footpaths, their use can be intimidating for pedestrians because of the speeds they travel. Given that they are currently illegal, there is no requirement that they have a warning device. If they do, our experience is that they are not used.

It is important that all motorised mobility devices are speed limited if they are allowed to use public footpaths and shared use paths. We suggest a 15kmh limit is appropriate.

Use of streets

While we are ambivalent about the value of these devices, we do see potential value in their role as mobile traffic calmers. It is well known that motorists will drive more slowly if they have to share the street with slower road users such as cyclists. Users of personal mobility devices should be allowed and indeed encouraged to use residential streets, especially when the posted speed limit is below 50kmh.

While a higher speed limit is appropriate for road use, we do not see how two different speed limits could be enforced. It would be much simpler to limit the device to a single speed – 15kmh. However, we note that Queensland has a two-speed regime and suggest their experience should be explored before any decisions are made.

We accept that there are limits on what would be appropriate road use. Arterial roads are not suitable, unless they have continuous bike lanes. Given this is so often not the case, it would be legally messy to allow them to use bike lanes on arterial roads.

Insurance

We do not believe that current insurance arrangements are acceptable for people hit while walking on the footpath, whether they be by e-scooters, cyclists, joggers or other pedestrians. It is useless to expect those liable should have insurance to cover those situations. We understand that Beam and Neuron carry insurance, but this can be easily voided if the terms of use are not abided by, e.g., not wearing a helmet.

South Australia needs a no-fault personal injury insurance scheme, similar to that adopted in New Zealand. Ideally it would be nation-wide. This is the only means by which innocent pedestrians can expect to be protected from the financial cost of being injured by reckless use of personal mobility devices and cyclists riding on footpaths.

Yours sincerely



Sharon Kelsey
Executive Director
Walking SA