



Brisbane Central Business District Bicycle User Group

CBD BUG

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The Honourable Mark Bailey MP
Minister for Transport and Main Roads:
GPO Box 2644
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Via email to: roadsafety@tmr.qld.gov.au

Dear Minister

Brisbane CBD BUG submission for Ministerial roundtable to discuss the use of Personal Mobility Devices in Queensland

The following is provided as a contribution to the roundtable discussion scheduled for Wednesday 24 November 2021 to discuss the use of Personal Mobility Devices in Queensland.

Following the emergence of these devices, and in particular the Brisbane launch in late-2018 of the Lime shared e-scooters scheme, the CBD BUG has continued to support e-mobility / micro-mobility as a more safe and environmentally friendly personal transport alternative to private motor vehicles.

E-scooter sales are booming, and a transport revolution appears to be underway. As a convenient and cheap travel mode, e-scooters are reducing the private motor vehicle's dominance as the default mode for personal travel. Based on some of the media reporting about these devices their use also appears to be generating some moral panic.

A major element of the "problem" of e-scooters is that most of the road space in the Brisbane CBD is dedicated to cars – while pedestrians, scooter riders and cyclists are on the whole left to share narrow footpaths, which inherently causes risk. Outside the Brisbane CBD footpaths (where they even exist) are in poor condition, and hence, scooter riders must often use the road. The lack of appropriate infrastructure for all travel options is a clear case of failure by the Qld Government and Brisbane City Council.

Despite this lack of segregation recent research by CARRS-Q found that when riders of privately owned and shared scooters and bicycles were within one metre of pedestrians, conflict rates ranged from just zero to 1.5 % and no collisions were observed. In this regard the researchers state that "interactions with pedestrians are common but conflicts rarely occur in footpath riding". (Source: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33549973/>). Therefore, the crash risk that e-scooters have been suggested to cause for other path users appears to be almost non-existent.

CARRS-Q research has revealed other useful insights into e-scooter riders and their behaviours – including that users of privately-owned scooters tend to be older than shared scooter riders and while having access to a car their scooter trips are replacing car trips. (Source: https://eprints.qut.edu.au/212307/1/CBD_BUG_2021_escooters.pdf). With Brisbane's chronic traffic congestion and the infrequency of local public transport, the shift to this new technology by riders of privately owned scooters should be supported by all levels of government.

The CBD BUG is aware of only three e-scooter rider fatalities occurring in Brisbane over the three years since their usage started becoming popular. Over this same time there has been about 1.8 million trips made via the shared e-scooters and an unknown number of trips via privately-owned e-scooters. Therefore, the risk of fatality from using an e-scooter seems extremely low.

These results point to e-scooters not being unsafe, and accordingly, the CBD BUG suggests scooters should be allowed to be ridden on shared paths, separated paths and bicycle paths, footpaths (unless otherwise signed like in the Queen St Mall) and “local” roads (i.e., suburban backstreets with speed limits of 50km/h or less).

In relation to the serious crash between a scooter rider and a motorist in Fortitude Valley on 9 November 2021 we have only the limited details reported by the media. However, given the all too common failure by motor vehicle drivers to give way to people crossing the road we would not be at all surprised if this was again the underlying cause of this crash.

Therefore, to improve the safety of these devices (and also the safety of people walking and people riding bicycles) the Queensland Government should:

- 1. amend the *Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Road Rules) Regulation 2009* e.g. Division 2, to clarify when motor vehicle drivers must give way to all these vulnerable road users who are crossing the road, and**
- 2. initiate an ongoing and widespread media campaign to inform motorists of this requirement.**

Only last week another child was rushed to hospital in a critical condition after being struck by a car at Burpengary. Yet due to “car blindness” the regular occurrence of such events seems to pass without a serious reaction from authorities. This blind spot covers almost every aspect of the negative consequences of car over-dependence – including the annual deaths from motor vehicle emissions that have been estimated to exceed the official road toll.

Queensland also continues to set a default urban speed limit of 50 km/h that allows motor vehicles to be driven at unsafe speeds in quiet back streets, in the face of compelling international evidence that 30 km/h is the safe maximum speed for these environments.

A common criticism by opponents of e-scooter riders is the lack of insurance coverage should a rider injure another road user. We know there are scooter riders who would like to be insured, and some may be covered via their house and contents insurance. But most would likely not have insurance because coverage is not available. In view of this market failure and the benefits to the transport system of supporting micro-mobility forms of transport like e-scooters, **we encourage the Qld Government to ensure a form of affordable third party insurance is available for e-scooter riders.**

The Queensland Government and Brisbane City Council have performed admirably to date in enabling the introduction of e-scooters - and the community is reaping the benefits of this travel behaviour change. What is not needed is a knee-jerk, over-reaction by authorities that stymies the growth in these devices and forces people back into their cars.

We would draw your attention to the RACQ also supporting e-scooters because they are a “cleaner, greener and more sustainable transport alternative” that “could be key to easing traffic congestion and driving long-term change in travel behaviour for the better”.

(Source: <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/e-scooter-revolution-why-brisbane-can-t-afford-to-go-over-the-handlebars-20210318-p57bxb.html>)

Accordingly, we propose your department commissions the academic sector to undertake research to develop a better understanding of the usage of these devices and also obtain the views/experiences of other path users from e-scooters before implementing any ill-considered over-regulation that deters the community’s uptake of this valuable new technology.

In relation to Council's announcement of a six-month trial of a curfew on shared e-scooter trips starting in Fortitude Valley during certain hours and a lower 15 km/h speed limiting applying across the rest of the CBD during this same time span – this is viewed as poorly considered approach. The impacts of this curfew on shift/entertainment/hospitality workers who have to depend on this transport to travel home after hours have clearly not been taken into account. Secondly, it would seem methodologically preferable to trial one change at a time, starting with the hours-based speed limit reduction as speed is a key factor in crash severity, to enable assessment of this change in isolation from potentially confounding variables.

If there is one negative issue arising from the shared e-scooters that resonates widely with people who ride bicycles - it is the indiscriminate parking of these devices so they obstruct footpaths and other active travel thoroughfares - with scooter users and "juicers" offenders in this regard. **In the Brisbane CBD BUG's submission on Council's e-mobility strategy we called for clearly indicated scooter parking in the zones/precincts where scooters are often parked, and we would again call for this approach. This should also be supplemented by geofencing areas to force shared e-scooters to be left away from paths and footpaths. Ideally, we would like more road space to be used for scooter parking instead of taking up more of Brisbane's very limited footpath space. Additionally, if e-scooters are parked inappropriately a charge should be levied for a relocation fee (they do this now in London).**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important discussion impacting the safe travel of many Brisbane residents and visitors.

Yours faithfully



Paul French
Co-convenor
Brisbane CBD BUG
23 November 2021

Cc: Cr Ryan Murphy, Chair, Brisbane City Council Transport Committee.
Space for Cycling Brisbane