

Your local voice



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**Submission on Electric Personal Transportation Devices
- Electric Scooters in particular**

Dear Shane,

The Weston Creek Community Council [WCCC] welcomes the opportunity to comment on the use of electric personal transportation devices and electric scooters in particular.

This seems to open a can of worms on what devices can be, and should be, used where and the need for new and improved infrastructure to enable their "best and safest" use.

Firstly, we support the use of new and innovative transportation devices with guarded optimism. As you have asked, it is how, who and where they are used that are the questions.

Let me make some general points first.

Council notes that such devices are already on sale in Canberra, with quite a range of options being available.

They provide both an alternate mode of transport and an additional mode of transport where they can be used on a shorter leg of a journey, such as when traversing the additional distances now required to join some rapid bus services.

They also provide quite a portable form of transport for people on low incomes.

Would they take people off public transport and is that an issue? They also can assist with "last leg" of the journey

They could also be an alternative way for children to get to school.

Essentially Government needs to decide on what speed limit is to apply to these devices. If it is slow [a limit of 10 kmh] then they are probably ok to be used on

footpaths. If, however, it is quicker, then Government needs to invest a great deal of funds quickly to bring the infrastructure up to date to accommodate them. A failure to do so will be seen as a failure of Government. Promising the funds won't cut it with the community today as we have seen these promises all before.

So lets look at the specific questions:

1. **Who or how Old?** – some would say no age limit while others would say 17 when you can apply for a car licence to drive on roads. This answer depends on where they can be used and what speed limit, if any, would be placed on them. Already we see different age restrictions within Australia and overseas. Nationally consistent rules would be desirable to avoid confusion.
2. **Where can they be used?** – Council would say no to use on footpaths or in pedestrian zones. They should be able to be used on shared paths and bike lanes on roads where the speed limit is 60 kmh or less. This needs to be the case in Canberra with major local roads having a speed limit of 60 kmh as against the normal 50 kmh in local streets.

This then adds pressure to how old and the need for anyone riding on roads to be aware of road rules. This differs from bicycles who currently use the footpaths and many schoolchildren ride their bikes there which makes it much safer for them.

Alternatively, place a speed limit of 10 kmh on them and they can be used anywhere off the road. If this is not the case then we would need to be much clearer where they could be used. While signposting would go some of the way, there also needs to be reinforcement through education and some enforcement.

3. **Safety** – Another area of concern.
 - a. Helmets are a must if we have them on bicycles and segways then they must be compulsory for scooters.
 - b. Should they be limited to one passenger? There is already plenty of dual usage, particularly with parents and a small child together. We don't limit bicycles so why should we limit scooters.
 - c. If they are to be used in "on road bicycle lanes" do we need to implement similar rules for bicycles as we have for cars and in relation to scooters given that bicycles are likely to be faster than scooters. And then what about segways?
 - d. Speed limit – we don't limit bicycles apart from the road speed limit and if we do place a speed limit who is there to enforce it? Queensland has 25 kmh limit while South Australia has 15 kmh limits. As I have said above a lower speed limit of 10 kmh would allow their wider use on footpaths but at this speed ban them from the roads.
 - e. Low on road visibility – we already have issues with seeing bicycles on roads. Scooters have a low visibility and present a small profile how can we manage this? No riding at night?
 - f. Bells/horns and lights – Clearly the rules need to be consistent with the rules already established for bicycles and a warning device such as a bell or a horn needs to be compulsory. If they are allowed to be used at

night, then lights must also be compulsory – and how can you stop their use at night?

- g. Is there a need for a speedometer to be part of the scooter to provide details of speed to the rider? We note the better quality power assisted bicycles are already equipped in such a way.
- h. Increasing the mix of transport modes may sound good but this brings with it a host of additional issues to be considered particularly around safety. More accidents place a greater strain on the health system.
- i. Council would appreciate clarity before any trial commences on how these devices would fit into the personal injury liability arrangements, including compulsory third party insurance and personal liability insurance.
- j. The power should be limited in the same way as it is for the electric bicycle [250 watts] in the ACT yet in WA the limit is 200 watts. As mentioned above, a quick perusal of the marketplace found 400 watt devices on sale
- k. To be successfully integrated into the transport mix, they need to be permitted to be carried on all forms of Public transport

This whole issue of transport modes and legislation is difficult to resolve.

What this brings to light though is the need for better infrastructure for bicycles and electric personal transportation devices. For this to work in the ACT there is a need for a commitment from the ACT Government to undertake major upgrades to shared paths, bike paths and footpaths now!!. It is not good just to accept the technology changes without the appropriate infrastructure to make it work.

There is also a need not only to upgrade some shared paths and bikeways but to create new ones for this next generation and to separate all of these devices from the roads starting with those roads with speed limits over 60kmh. There needs to be a change of thinking as to how these devices can be used safely and take them off the roads, if possible.

That then brings with it the need for clear Government leadership on the vexed issue of the financial contribution to infrastructure of users of these devices, as well as all other unregistered vehicles. Something that Government can't really ignore.

In all of this consideration Government should not create a Public risk without addressing how it is to be mitigated. Sadly, if it is not enforceable it does not happen. Public safety must outweigh public convenience.

Council remains available to discuss this Submission at any time

Tom Anderson
Chair
Weston Creek Community Council