



PEDESTRIAN COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

Health – Safety – Access – Amenity

The Walking Class

Patron: The Honourable Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO

Position Statement

E-RIDEABLES

Preamble: The rapid emergence and proliferation of e-rideables, including but not limited to e-scooters, e-bikes, e-skateboards, hoverboards, e-monocycles, Segways and other battery-powered personal mobility devices, marks a significant shift in urban transportation. While these devices offer potential benefits in terms of convenience and reduced emissions, their integration into our urban fabric has been hasty and poorly managed, raising serious concerns about public safety, accessibility, and long-term public health.

As we stand on the cusp of a transportation revolution, the rapid evolution of e-rideable technology presents both opportunities and challenges. The emergence of more advanced and diverse e-rideable vehicles in the coming years is not just likely, but inevitable. It is virtually impossible to predict what e-rideables will look like in five years, let alone a decade from now. This uncertainty underscores the critical importance of the decisions governments are making today, as these choices, many of which might be irreversible, will shape our urban landscapes and transportation systems for years to come.

The current state of affairs demands immediate attention and thoughtful regulation, as the potential consequences of mismanagement are severe. If not properly addressed, the proliferation of e-rideables could lead to a safety crisis akin to a public health pandemic, with far-reaching impacts on urban mobility, pedestrian safety, active transport and public space usage. The regulatory frameworks established now will be challenging to reverse in the future, making it imperative that we act with foresight and caution.

Governments across Australia have failed to provide adequate laws, penalties, training, education, enforcement, and infrastructure to safely accommodate these new modes of transport. The lack of standardised national regulations has resulted in a patchwork of inconsistent rules across states and territories, creating confusion for users and enforcement challenges for authorities.

Moreover, the trials conducted thus far have been insufficient and ineffective, failing to fully address the complex issues arising from the introduction of e-rideables into our public spaces. Of particular concern is the glaring oversight in considering the needs and safety of vulnerable road users, especially people with disabilities. Those with vision or hearing impairments face increased risks and challenges navigating shared spaces with silent, fast-moving e-rideables. Similarly, the elderly population, already at higher risk of serious injury from falls, now face additional hazards on footpaths and shared paths.

Perhaps most alarmingly, there has been little consideration given to the long-term health implications of replacing active modes of transport, particularly walking, with e-rideables. The potential negative impacts on public health, due to reduced physical activity are a serious concern that must be addressed.

As we move forward, it is imperative that we develop a comprehensive, national approach to e-rideable regulation that prioritises safety, accessibility, and public health. This approach must be based on rigorous research, meaningful public consultation, and a commitment to creating inclusive public spaces that serve all members of our community. Only through such a thoughtful and measured approach can we hope to harness the benefits of e-rideable technology while mitigating its risks and negative impacts.

Definition of E-Rideables

An e-rideable is defined as any personal mobility device that is powered by an electric motor. This category includes a variety of vehicles such as electric scooters, electric bicycles, electric skateboards, hoverboards, monocycles, and Segways. E-rideables are designed for individual use and are often employed for short-distance travel, providing an alternative to traditional modes of transportation like walking or driving. To ensure clarity and distinction from Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs) used by people with disabilities, e-rideables are specifically defined as devices intended for general personal mobility and recreational use, rather than for assisting individuals with mobility impairments. PMDs for people with disabilities are designed to meet specific medical and accessibility needs and are regulated under different standards and guidelines to ensure they provide the necessary support and safety for their users.

People with Disabilities

Over 90% of Vision Australia members feel less safe walking due to e-rideables, highlighting the need for regulations prioritizing pedestrian safety, especially for those with disabilities. Australia's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires equal access to the physical environment. The rapid introduction of e-rideables without considering people with disabilities threatens these commitments. Regulations must ensure the safety and equal access of public spaces for people with disabilities

Micromobility NOT Active Transport

Many advocates of these vehicles refer to them as "Active Transport". This is utterly false and misleading. Except for some legal Pedelecs (e-bikes), nearly all other e-rideables are the very antithesis of Active Transport. They are "Inactive Transport". Active Transport requires health-enhancing levels of large muscular activity with an energy expenditure commensurate with health benefits. The correct word is "micromobility".

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prohibition on Footpaths

- E-rideables must be prohibited on all footpaths. They should only be allowed on shared paths and on roads where the speed limit is less than 50 km/h.

2. Shared Path Compliance

- Ensure that all shared paths comply with Austroads guidelines to provide safe and accessible pathways for both pedestrians and e-rideable users
- All riders must understand that pedestrians have absolute right of way on a shared path: the law states that riders must slow down and give way to pedestrians at all times, even if that means coming to a stop.
- All e-rideables must be equipped with a bell or horn. They must only be permitted to be used when there is an emergency. They must never be used to coerce, harass or intimidate pedestrians.

3. Speed Limits

- Implement a national default speed limit of 10 km/h for e-rideables on all shared paths.

4. Infrastructure

- Improve infrastructure to create safe, dedicated pathways for e-rideables, separate from pedestrian paths.
- Develop dedicated on-road parking bays for e-rideables to prevent obstruction of footpaths.

5. Enforcement

- Ensure consistent enforcement of e-rideable rules and regulations, including speed limits and proper use of designated paths.
- Engage contractors to impound inappropriately parked e-rideables, similar to towing vehicles parked in clearways.
- Empower police to conduct random breath testing of e-rideable users to ensure compliance with alcohol and drug regulations.
- Allow council rangers to assist in enforcing e-rideable laws, including issuing fines for offences.

6. Lights and Indicators

- All e-rideables must be equipped with front and rear lights that are visible from at least 200 metres away.
- E-rideables should have indicators or turn signals to improve visibility and communication with other road users.
- Lights must be used at all times when operating in low-light conditions or at night (if night-time use is permitted).
- Promote the use of high-visibility helmets, clothing and lights to increase user visibility, especially at night.

7. Rider Education

- Implement public awareness campaigns to educate e-rideable users about the rules, penalties and safe practices.
- Provide training programs for new users to ensure they understand how to operate e-rideables safely.

8. Data Collection

- Collect and publish independent data on all aspects of e-rideable use, including crashes, deaths, injuries, and penalties issued.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of regulations and make necessary adjustments based on data.
- Measure the health and adverse effects of e-rideables on walking and active transport, ensuring that e-rideables are classified as micromobility and never as active transport.

9. Insurance

- Provide a no-fault insurance cover for pedestrians injured by e-rideable users, ensuring coverage even if the rider was breaking the law at the time of the incident.

10. Public Consultation

- Engage in meaningful public consultation, particularly with vulnerable groups most affected by e-rideables (particularly people who are vision or hearing impaired), to inform policy development.

11. National Consistency

- Develop standardised national rules and regulations for e-rideables to ensure consistency across states and territories.
- Include clear definitions and classifications for different types of e-rideables to avoid regulatory confusion.

12. Accessibility

- Ensure that the needs and safety of people with disabilities, especially those with vision and hearing impairments, are considered in all e-rideable regulations and infrastructure.
- Design public spaces to be inclusive and accessible for all users, including those who rely on walking aids or wheelchairs.

13. Trial Evaluations

- Conduct thorough and transparent evaluations of e-rideable trials, considering all impacts, including those on vulnerable road users.
- Use findings from trials to inform future regulations and infrastructure planning.

14. Licensing and Registration

- Require all e-rideable users to have a valid driver's licence, with a minimum age requirement of 17 years.
- Implement a registration system for e-rideables, including a clearly visible unique identifier for each device.
- Ensure that registered operators are liable for certain offences, such as parking offences and camera-detected offences.
- Mandate that e-rideables meet minimum safety standards, similar to other motor vehicles, to ensure roadworthiness and compliance with safety regulations.

15. Penalties and Enforcement

- Implement a penalty system for e-rideable users that mirrors those for motor-scooter riders, including demerit points on licences and licence suspension for repeat offenders.
- Empower local council rangers to assist police to enforce these penalties consistently across all jurisdictions.
- Implement a system for identifying and tracking repeat offenders, potentially including temporary or permanent bans on e-rideable use for severe or repeat-offenders.
- Ensure that rental companies are held accountable for their users' behaviour, with potential fines or operating restrictions for companies that fail to adequately educate or monitor their customers.
- Establish a clear process for reporting offences, making it easier for pedestrians and other road users to report dangerous e-rideable behaviour.
- Conduct regular enforcement blitzes to raise awareness and encourage compliance with e-rideable laws and regulations.

16. No-Ride Zones

- Require local councils to declare all shopping centre strips and areas of high pedestrian activity as No-Ride zones, with clear signage stating that riders must dismount.
- Ensure that e-rideables cannot be used on pedestrian crossings unless they are traffic light controlled crossings with bicycle signage

17. Speed Governance and Anti-Tampering Measures

- Mandate that all e-rideables are governed so that they cannot exceed 25 km/h under any circumstances.
- Implement very high penalties for tampering with e-rideable motors or speed governors.
- Equip enforcement agencies with the necessary technology to test whether e-rideable motors have been tampered with or modified to exceed governed limits.
- Require manufacturers and retailers to implement tamper-proof designs and provide warranties that become void if speed governors are modified.

By implementing these recommendations, we can create a safer, more inclusive environment for all road users while accommodating the benefits of e-rideables.

We must put pedestrians first and ensure that e-mobility for some doesn't result in the immobility of others.