

## **NON-REGISTERED MOTORISED VEHICLES**

**Organisation:** Orange City Council and Cabonne Shire Council

**Date Received:** 29/04/2013

## **PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO NON REGISTERED MOTORISED VEHICLES**

### **STAYSAFE (JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY)**

#### **THE ORANGE CITY COUNCIL AND CABONNE SHIRE COUNCILS' SUBMISSION**

The motorised mobility scooter is a valuable device providing access and mobility to those who have limited options due to health, age and mobility impairment. This device, to improve the mobility of people who otherwise may be socially isolated, has made a considerable contribution to the quality of life to the users. The scooter is growing in popularity and is not solely utilised by older people. People of all ages are using this form of transport from late teens to octogenarians and it is set to increase with an ageing population in our communities.

The mobility scooter is a consumer item and anyone may purchase regardless of age, cognitive function or lack of sight. The device and passenger is classed as a pedestrian by the Australian Road Rules.

Community education is the only policy instrument currently available to address mobility scooter issues, including lack of relevant infrastructure, conflict issues with vehicles and pedestrians. A number of Councils in NSW have promoted Scooter Safety Workshops and developed education resources for mobility users as no formal education, training or licensing currently exists for users. All attempts at self-regulation to protect vulnerable road users has had limited success and fatal and injury crashes continue to occur. The lack of policy allows people who have never had a drivers licence to use the mobility scooter as a transport option without any knowledge of Australian Road Rules,

This submission will raise community concerns that mobility scooters need checks and balances to safely interact in the community with pedestrians, the vision impaired and other forms of transport.

#### **PEDESTRIAN ISSUES**

The mobility scooter is classed as a pedestrian with a speed limit of 10 km/h which is often not what occurs in practice, as many have been checked by community speed watch trailers at 15 km/h to 20km/h. The latest models can travel up to 50 kms before requiring the battery to be recharged. Some Councils are offering mobility scooter recharge stations at shopping centres and this intervention will extend the reach of the vehicles.

Some scooters are bulky with a focus on the comfort of the rider. They are electric and as such are very hard to hear, this is disconcerting for people with low vision and people who use guide dogs have stated that the scooters often startle the dogs.

The size and speed of the scooter is in conflict with other pedestrians including, older people on foot, young children, people with a disability and people with vision impairment. The potential for scooters to cause serious injury to pedestrians and damage to equipment, guide dogs is evident in reports of mobility scooters knocking down and running over people in the street and shopping centres.

The issue of parking of mobility scooters at the entrance of shops on footpaths was raised in consultations with the Orange Access Committee and the Vision impaired community in Orange. People with vision impairment use the business frontage as a guide with the tap of their cane to remain walking in a straight line. Any obstacle on the footpath can become a hazard in this process.

## **TRAFFIC ISSUES**

The motorised mobility scooter is an unregistered vehicle without insurance including third party and public liability, licence or permit for users. Herein lies the problem as many users adapt the motorised mobility scooter as a transport option for on road use with other registered vehicles. Not all scooters have mirrors, headlights, taillights or flag which is extremely dangerous on winter roads.

The mobility scooter like all modes of transport vehicles continues to evolve to adapt to consumer needs, such as enclosure of the driver to protect from inclement weather and the ability to travel greater distances. The greater distance and speed these unregistered motorised vehicles can go, the greater number who will utilise the existing road infrastructure in rural areas.

The mobility scooters are currently used by many as alternative vehicles in central business districts, on key regional roads and interstate highways as a form of transport. There have been reports of these units mixing in traffic with four wheel drive vehicles, semi-trailers and B Doubles, all of whom would have limited sight of the scooters existence in their proximity.

Concerns have been expressed in our community that a number of people who have lost their drivers' licence for drink driving now use a scooter and continue to drink drive. There is evidence of mobility scooter riders with cognitive impairment have been involved with multiple traffic and pedestrians crashes in our communities.

People with vision impairment are required to be assessed for their suitability to use a guide dog, a similar system of assessment may be a way forward to support the growing use of unregistered motorised vehicles in the community.

The community also raised the issue there should be a separation between mobility scooters and motorised wheelchairs (at present there is no difference between the two).

### **PERMIT SYSTEM FOR SCOOTER USE**

During consultation with community members, the Orange Access Committee and local people with vision impairment there was a proposal that a relevant permit system for scooter use may be a way to address some of the following concerns:

- people who have never held a driving permit purchase mobility scooters and take them onto roads amidst vehicle traffic with no understanding of the road laws;
- people with significant vision loss purchasing a mobility scooter and travelling on roadways and footpaths may endanger other travellers; and
- People with impaired cognitive ability may pose a risk to other road users.

### **REGISTRATION IN OTHER STATES AND TERRITORIES**

Motorised scooters, mini-bikes and other motorised devices in the Australian Capital Territory require registration. In Victoria motorised bicycles require registration however mobility scooters and motorised wheelchairs are exempt.

### **REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS—INDIVIDUAL IN QUEENSLAND**

In Queensland the Department of Transport and Main Roads reviews the appropriate supporting documentation prior to registration.

---

When registering a motorised wheelchair for the first time, the applicant must provide a certificate/statement/letter from a medical practitioner, a registered occupational therapist or a registered physiotherapist confirming that due to a physical or medical condition the person's mobility is severely impaired and they require the use of a motorised wheelchair for assisted travel. A certificate/letter/statement from a medical practitioner, a registered occupational therapist or a registered physiotherapist must be provided each time a different motorised wheelchair is registered.

### **CONCLUSION**

A growing number of fatal and injury crashes include mobility scooters and this number will continue to grow without intervention. The level of intervention is subject to policy development at a state level.

At a local level the community continues to see a minority repeatedly involved in unsafe practices and in fatal and injury crashes of which we are powerless to intervene.

CONTACTS: Andrea Hamilton-Vaughan

Road Safety Officer, Orange City and Cabonne Shire Councils

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

David Kidd

Risk Management Officer, Cabonne Council

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]