



CLIENT INFORMATION BRIEF

For: Dr A. Douglas, M.P.

Attention: Bev Malseed

Request: Mobility Scooters

Date 05/09/11

Introduction

You requested information on mobility scooters, including statistics on the registration numbers over the past five years for motorised scooters, mopeds (or scooters) and motorcycles.

Mobility scooters are also variously known as motorised mobility scooters (MMS), motorised chairs, motorised wheelchairs, 'buggies', or 'gophers'. They can be three or four wheeled vehicles used by elderly or disabled people as a means to enable transport in place of walking.

In 2006, The Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit (VISU) reported on the increasing use, and injuries related to, mobility scooters in that State.

*"New makes and models are proliferating and safety concerns have been raised in a number of forums because MMS are starting to be viewed by older people as an alternative to the motor vehicle rather than only as an aid for those who have trouble walking any distance due to a physical disability or a health condition."*¹

The motorised scooters may be used inside, for example in the home or in shopping centres, or outside on the road or footpaths. In Queensland, the definition of a 'pedestrian' in the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 includes a motorised wheelchair.

Mobility scooters are "not classed as vehicles if their speed limit is less than 10 km/h and they don't need to be registered except in Queensland where registration is free. Any scooter capable of exceeding 10 km/h does require a licence and registration in all states."²

¹ Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit (VISU), Hazard No. 62, 2006, *Consumer product-related injury (2): Injury related to the use of motorised mobility scooters*, accessed 5 September 2011 at <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/VISU/hazard/haz62.pdf>

² Choice magazine, *On your scooter*, article accessed 2 September 2011 at <http://www.independentliving.com.au/images/choice-mobility-scooter-guide.pdf>

Injuries and deaths

In 2011, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission released a report *Targeted study of injury data involving motorised mobility scooters*, which reported the following key findings regarding mobility scooter related injuries and fatalities:

- There were 442 motorised mobility scooter *fall* injury hospitalisations in Australia over the two year period July 2006 to June 2008;
- The total number of motorised mobility scooter hospitalisations for July 2006 to June 2008 is likely to be greater than 700, due to coding issues with the hospital data;
- Key injuries related to motorised scooter accidents are fractures and head injuries;
- The most common location for sustaining an injury was the road, street or highway followed by the home;
- There is a substantial emerging upward trend in related deaths and serious injuries among persons aged 60 years and over.³

There were 62 identified fatalities related to motorised mobility scooters from July 2000 to August 2010 in Australia, plus another 14 likely cases that were under investigation.

- Men are significantly over represented in mortality data related to motorized mobility scooters;
- Most deaths related to motorised mobility scooters were the result of collisions with a motor vehicle and the most common cause of death was a head injury;
- The largest proportion of deaths in those aged 80 years and over were the result of being struck by motor vehicles whereas the largest proportion of deaths in those aged less than 80 years were a result of falls;
- A large proportion of deaths occurred when motorised scooter users were crossing a road, attempting to alight from the scooter and entering or approaching intersections.⁴

³ Monash University, Department of Forensic Medicine, (2011) *Targeted Study of Injury Data Involving Motorised Mobility Scooters: a report commissioned by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission*, accessed 2 September 2011 at <http://www.productsafety.gov.au/content/item.phtml?itemId=985925&nodeId=aa8864219ef7fd9896da173d0c90825&fn=Targeted%20Study%20of%20Injury%20Data%20Involving%20Motorised%20Mobility%20Scooters.pdf>

⁴ Monash University, Department of Forensic Medicine, (2011) *Targeted Study of Injury Data Involving Motorised Mobility Scooters: a report commissioned by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission*, accessed 2 September 2011 at <http://www.productsafety.gov.au/content/item.phtml?itemId=985925&nodeId=aa8864219ef7fd9896da173d0c90825&fn=Targeted%20Study%20of%20Injury%20Data%20Involving%20Motorised%20Mobility%20Scooters.pdf>

Queensland

Queensland requires 'mobility scooters' to be registered.

A motorised wheelchair used by a person with a disability on a road, or footpath, must be registered as a motorised wheelchair. Motorised wheelchairs may be registered to an individual or to an organisation. These organisations may include nursing homes, shopping centres, education institutions and hire companies.⁵

The following applies to motorised scooters in Queensland:

- There are no fees for registration or compulsory third party (CTP) insurance for motorised wheelchairs;
- There are no transfer fees;
- The registered operator must have a doctor's certificate, be capable of safely operating the equipment and also agree to abide by the Queensland Road Rules.

The Queensland Department of Transport provides a Fact Sheet about the use of motorised wheelchairs in Queensland, as well as the following information:

The definition of a 'pedestrian' in the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 includes a motorised wheelchair.

Sections 288 and 289 of the Queensland Road Rules provide rules for driving on paths and nature strips. These vehicles are restricted by law to a maximum speed of 10 km/h and a maximum tare weight of 110 kilograms.

All the rules relating to pedestrians also apply to operators of motorised wheelchairs. The terms 'gophers' and 'scooters' are also used to identify motorised wheelchairs.

A driver licence is not required to operate a motorised wheelchair. The rider of a motorised wheelchair must be certified as being mobility impaired.

Motorised wheelchairs that use the footpath, cross roads or drive on the side of the road where the footpath is unsuitable must be registered. More information is available on the Motorised wheelchairs page.

The RACQ *Road Ahead* magazine published in 2008 a legal advisory summary of the requirements for motorised scooters in Queensland:

- If the motorised wheelchair can travel at more than 10 km/h on level ground, it is classified as a 'vehicle' and is regulated by the Queensland road rules;
- In Queensland, a motorised wheelchair of this nature must be driven on the road;
- When driving a motorised wheelchair on the road the same road rules that apply for cars will apply for the motorised wheelchair;

⁵ Queensland. Department of Transport, registration, website accessed 2 September 2011 at <http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/Registration/Registering-vehicles/Wheelchairs-and-small-devices/Motorised-wheelchairs.aspx>

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- If the motorised wheelchair travels at less than 10 km/h, has an unladen mass of not more than 110 kg and the driver's physical condition requires the use of such a wheelchair, then it can be driven on a path;
- Owners of motorised wheelchairs that can travel at more than 10 km/h must register the vehicles with Queensland Transport and are issued with a number plate.⁶

Statistics

The Queensland *Department of Transport and Main Roads* maintains statistics on registered vehicles by body type in Queensland.

Table: Number of motorised wheelchairs, scooters (mopeds) and motorcycles 2007-2011⁷

NUMBER OF MOTORISED WHEELCHAIRS, MOPEDS and MOTORCYCLES ON QUEENSLAND REGISTER AS AT 30 JUNE FROM 2007 TO 2011					
VEHICLE TYPE	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
MOPED	10,519	12,450	13,696	13,360	13,155
MOTORISED WHEELCHAIR	12,048	13,606	15,495	17,003	18,558
MOTORCYCLES	120,267	133,063	141,524	144,551	149,076

Note: 'Motorcycles' data includes motorcycles, side cars and motor tricycles less Mopeds, which is reported separately.⁸

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⁶ Royal Queensland Automobile Club (RACQ), Street Legal, Scooters, wheelchairs rule, *Road Ahead* magazine, Dec/Jan 2008, pp. 25, accessed 5 September 2011 at QPL online collection database <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/ConcordDocs/A08/A081219VVT04.PDF>

⁷ Queensland. Department of Transport and Main Roads, *Vehicles on register in Queensland as at 30 June 1992 to 2011*, accessed 5 September 2011 at http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/~media/9d8bc6c9-24ea-4ec2-b0a9-07f2d5d0c008/stats_vehicles_on_register_queensland.pdf and emailed specific Data Analysis request for Motorised Wheelchair and Moped data, dated 2 September 2011.

⁸ Queensland. Department of Transport and Main Roads, *Vehicle registration body type examples*, accessed 5 September 2011 at http://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/~media/c0761dc5-f378-470e-90f9-ca9df6fb8fc0/pdf_body_type_examples_queensland.pdf

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