

Dr Trevor Hodson MBBS FRANZCO

17th December 2017

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members,

Re – **The need for regulation of mobility scooters, also known as motorised wheelchairs**

I am an ophthalmologist and from January 1995 until December 2016 worked in Mount Gambier, South Australia. Anecdotally I am aware of two incidents locally leading to the death or serious injury of the operator of a mobility scooter. One occurred when a main road was being crossed away from an intersection and the other where the operator was hit by a car reversing from a driveway. A report commissioned by the ACCC looks specifically at injuries and death amongst users of mobility scooters and issues 71 and 72 of Hazard published by the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit looks at pedestrian injuries more generally. Interestingly the latter reports indicate that cyclists are a greater hazard to pedestrians than mobility scooter users.

As you would know, a mobility scooter is regarded as being the equivalent of a pedestrian in terms of road rules both locally and internationally. By perusing the internet much useful information can be gained about the regulation of mobility scooters. In Australia there seems to be a general agreement that the top speed of scooters should be limited to 10kph. In the UK this limit is 4mph (6.4kph) and this is more in keeping with the walking speed usually quoted for a pedestrian of 5kph. To my knowledge Queensland is the only state that requires mobility scooters to be registered at no cost and this includes compulsory third party insurance. Some other states do advise users get public liability insurance.

No Australian states have a listed visual acuity requirement, so in effect a person who is visually impaired or legally blind can operate a mobility scooter. This does allow for some independence when these people would be otherwise unable to drive a car. In the UK there is a visual acuity requirement, needing users to be able to read a car registration plate at 40 feet.

The general indication for using a mobility scooter is inability to walk or difficulty when walking. Guidelines indicate the operator should be able to see well enough to clearly see the instruments on the panel and also to detect hazards around them when they are on

public footpaths, so there should be a visual acuity requirement. I think all users should be educated about their responsibilities when using footpaths and actively discouraged from using roadways. I would support policing of the speed limit of 10kph and if anything recommend a further reduction of the top speed to 5kph (walking pace) as I suspect higher speeds are more likely to lead to accidents involving pedestrians. I would also suggest that uniform regulations be considered to avoid confusion when users move interstate. The Queensland regulations appear to be the most comprehensive and best thought out. I would also recommend that no cost registration and CTP be universal. Inspection of the scooters to ensure they comply with the maximum speed requirements could be combined with registration renewal.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor

Dr Trevor Hodson.