



COTA VICTORIA

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Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
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26 February, 2018

Submission to the inquiry on the need for regulation of mobility scooters, also known as motorised wheelchairs

To Whom It May Concern,

Council on the Ageing Victoria (COTA Vic) represents the diverse voices of older Victorians and seeks to advance the rights, interests and futures of Victorians as we age. For more than 65 years, COTA has delivered services and information to older people, community groups and organisations alongside advocating for an inclusive and age friendly Victoria.

COTA Vic recognises ageing as a time of possibility, opportunity and influence. Through our current programs that include peer education, policy and advocacy and positive ageing. COTA Vic is in contact with over 30,000 older Victorians on a regular basis. In addition, COTA's program Seniors Information Victoria offers free information as an independent service, on a wide range of issues of interest to older Victorians.

We are pleased to respond to the Government's call for submissions regarding the need for regulation of mobility scooters, also known as motorised wheelchairs.

- This inquiry is looking into 'the need for regulation of mobility scooters, also known as motorised wheelchairs'. It should be noted that mobility scooters are not motorised wheelchairs. Wheelchairs have a very different function and are often built and/or modified to meet a user's particular needs. Unlike a mobility scooter, many people who use a motorised wheelchair do not have the ability to transfer from their wheelchair without assistance.
- We are concerned that in many outer suburbs, rural and regional areas there is very limited or no community and/or public transport. Some older people rely on mobility scooters as their only means of transport. We do not want to see an increase in social isolation by limiting the ability of older people to access their community.
- As with other all other road or footpath users, people using mobility scooters should be required to know and obey rules

- Under the current road safety act the maximum speed for a mobility scooter is 10kph. It is useful to know that most manufacturers of motorised scooters have a maximum speed of 8 kph, equivalent to a 'fast walk'.
- An unreasonable restriction on speed will increase journey times and this could impact on medical conditions.
- While further limiting the speed in highly congested pedestrian traffic areas makes good sense, motorised scooters do not have speedometers, and so adhering to the speed limit could be hard to accurately judge. A speedometer or something similar may need to become a mandatory piece of equipment.
- To ensure motorised scooters are not over the proposed weight limit will likely result in a reduced battery size. With a smaller capacity, people will need to recharge more often and/or limit the time they are in the community. If there are no recharging stations available it could also potentially strand a person in an undesirable place.
- Anyone can currently purchase a motorised scooter. There is no testing or license required. This should be addressed along with a registration system at no/ low cost. Training and information is required at time of purchase.
- Unlike cyclists, there is no requirement to wear a helmet on motorised scooters. This needs to be considered, especially if the weight limit is reduced. If they are lighter they are likely to will become less sturdy.
- It is neither practical nor cost effective to have powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters travelling on roads. Most roads will not be wide enough for a bicycle, car and mobility scooter lane in both directions

While COTA Vic supports the introduction of some regulation, any changes need to be sensitive to the needs of older people so that they are not further disadvantaged.

Yours sincerely

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