

Shared e-scooter expansion consultation

Via email – communityengagement@act.gov.au

Re: Shared e-scooter expansion

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the consultation on the further expansion of Canberra's shared e-scooter scheme.

As a Disabled Peoples Organisation (DPO), Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI) represents people with disabilities from the ACT in our systemic policy work.

This submission is also endorsed by the ACT Council of Social Service and Living Streets Canberra. Living Streets Canberra has a vision of everyone in Canberra being able to enjoy public spaces and walk easily, safely and conveniently.

Within Canberra, there are steadily increasing numbers of people with disability including older and frail Canberrans¹. In general, improving and protecting the accessibility and safety of public spaces for people with varying levels of mobility is necessary to achieve progress in various life domains highlighted in the ACT Wellbeing Indicators, including accessibility and connectivity, identity and belonging, and social connection.

The recently released [Reports on Government Services](#) shows that social participation outcomes for people with disability were in steep decline in the years prior to COVID with fewer people with disability reporting face-to-face contact with family or friends.

The importance of access to outdoor public spaces close to people's homes as a means of social participation and an enabler of health has been highlighted over the period of the COVID pandemic. For many people with disabilities and older Canberrans a walk or wheel around the neighbourhood has been one of remaining safe ways to promote physical and mental health and enjoy recreation for the last few years.

¹ The proportion of people with disability in the ACT has increased over time, rising from 15.8 per cent in 2012 to 16.2 per cent in 2015, and 19.4 per cent in 2018. Approximately 22,400 people, about 5.5% of the ACT's population, live with profound or severe disability (SDAC 2018)

This submission acknowledges the increase in the use of micro-mobility devices is often promoted as a sustainable, alternative, and cost-effective form of travel both in Australian cities and abroad. However, there are a number of serious and recurrent issues concerning the expansion of e-scooter usage that need to be raised and addressed.

One of the issues concerns public safety. AFI are hearing more reports from people with disability and frail aged Canberrans regarding near misses or collisions with e-scooters on footpaths, bikepaths and within shared spaces. As part of this we hear from people who increasingly concerned and risk averse about travel on bike paths and footpaths. The rules on the use of e-scooters state that users must give way to pedestrians on paths. However, this is left to the discretion of each individual user and is impossible to enforce. Users are also required to slow down when riding around other people. Again, the responsibility to do so sits with the user.

An additional issue concerns accessibility. Electronic geofencing is intended to prevent users from parking inappropriately – on roads, across footpaths, near roundabouts or adjacent to pedestrian crossings. The low fees for parking outside of designated zones, however, means that these rules are being consistently flouted. This creates serious accessibility barriers for people with disabilities. Scooters have even been left in front of kerb ramps, blocking pathways for wheelchairs and mobility devices. We understand that there is a trade-off in terms of convenience and specific parking zones, however this cannot take priority over the assurance of clear and accessible public pathways as well as seamless paths of travel for users with disability.

Unless these issues are addressed growth in the number of e-scooters may well lead to a rise in injuries and accidents as well as impeded travel and egress for people with disability. A spate of recent accidents causing serious injuries and deaths in the ACT, Queensland, and Victoria have prompted calls from the Australian Medical Association for tighter regulation of e-scooters. It will also risk people with disabilities and older Canberrans avoiding walking and wheeling on bike paths with negative impacts on physical and mental health.

Canberra's e-scooter regime requires improved infrastructure and signage, user and driver education, as well as expanded rule and legal enforcement. E-scooters largely operate in the absence of clear regulatory frameworks. If they are to become a fixed mode of transport then careful consideration needs to be given to how they fit within the broader transport, road- and street-use mix.

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If the public safety issues are not addressed by the above measures, then consideration should be given to restricting the speed, number and availability of e-scooters in the ACT.

Ideally these issues would be discussed and resolved over the course of an initial trial period *prior* to committing to further expansions.

These are not new issues. We note that most of the points in the submission were raised in [Living Streets Canberra's July 2019 submission](#) prior to the introduction of e-scooters.

This submission is also endorsed by the ACT Council of Social Service and Living Streets Canberra.

Please feel free to contact me on 0477 200 755 or via Craig@advocacyforinclusion.org to discuss this submission further.

Contacts for endorsing bodies are Dr Gemma Killen, Interim CEO, ACTCOSS, on 0480 439 131 or 6202 7223 email gemma.killen@actcoss.org.au and Gill King, Convenor Living Streets Canberra email gill@sustainablejill.com on 0407 953 959.

Regards

(Sent by email)

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10 February 2023