

# Ovecoming Regulatory Barriers - Personal Mobility Devices

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## Abstract

Australia has in place a ministerially approved national policy about the safe and legal use of Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs) on specific types of public infrastructure.

The policy recognises the growing global popularity of PMDs as people look for more innovative, efficient and individualised ways to move around cities and communities. The increased public demand for PMDs had placed many Australian jurisdictions under pressure to introduce regulations that permit the legal use of these devices, which had previously been operating in an undefined and increasingly inconsistent regulatory environment, leading to increased safety risks.

Australian model road rules legislation has now been amended to keep pace with the rate of change and growth of PMDs and deliver on the national policy to facilitate a nationally consistent approach to the safe and legal use of PMDs on certain public infrastructure.

## Background

Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs), such as electric scooters and electric skateboards, are typically small, portable and designed to carry one person over short to medium distances. These devices are growing in popularity globally as people look for more innovative and efficient ways to move around cities and communities. This shift in transportation preference, known as micro-mobility, is seeing people becoming less dependent on traditional forms of transport, such as cars, buses, trains and trams, in favour of these more individualised modes of transport.

Australian transport laws, however, predated the emergence of most of these devices. This meant most PMDs were not recognised within existing Australian road rules. Due to the public demand for PMDs, many Australian States and Territories were under increasing pressure to introduce regulations that permitted the legal use of these devices.

## Purpose of Policy

The policy objective of the PMD reform was to provide a nationally consistent approach to regulating PMDs that enables safe mobility and independence for all road users. Having a consistent set of rules across Australia that are easy to understand is likely to improve safety outcomes and encourage compliance.

## Description of Policy

The overall assessment of viable options to achieve a nationally consistent approach to PMD regulation highlighted the challenge of establishing a common national approach to permitting access of PMDs onto public roads and paths. Each variation of road/path access and speed approach resulted in trade-offs between the safety and amenity of different user types, broader economic benefits, as well as compliance and enforcement challenges. In addition, a national response was made far more challenging by the very different nature of dimensions, condition

48 and usage of road and path infrastructure across Australian urban environments. The agreed  
49 policy adopts the following:

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51 A regulatory framework for PMDs that outlines device characteristics, dimensions and weight  
52 specifications.

53 Access to particular infrastructure

54 Permitted speed variations on each infrastructure type

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## 56 **Conclusions and Next Steps**

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58 Development of the national policy highlighted the challenge of achieving complete national  
59 consistency in a federal system of government where sovereign states each have exclusive  
60 responsibility for road use policy and regulation.

61 The NTC adopted a primary organising principle of pursuing nationally consistent road rules  
62 with assessment based on an implicit “averaging” of road and path conditions, dimensions and  
63 usage. Ministerially agreed legislative changes achieve as much consistency as possible in the  
64 rules, whilst also acknowledging the individual context of some state and territory urban  
65 environments.

66 The NTC intends to perform an evaluation exercise in the future to determine further areas of  
67 national reform for the use of PMDs.

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