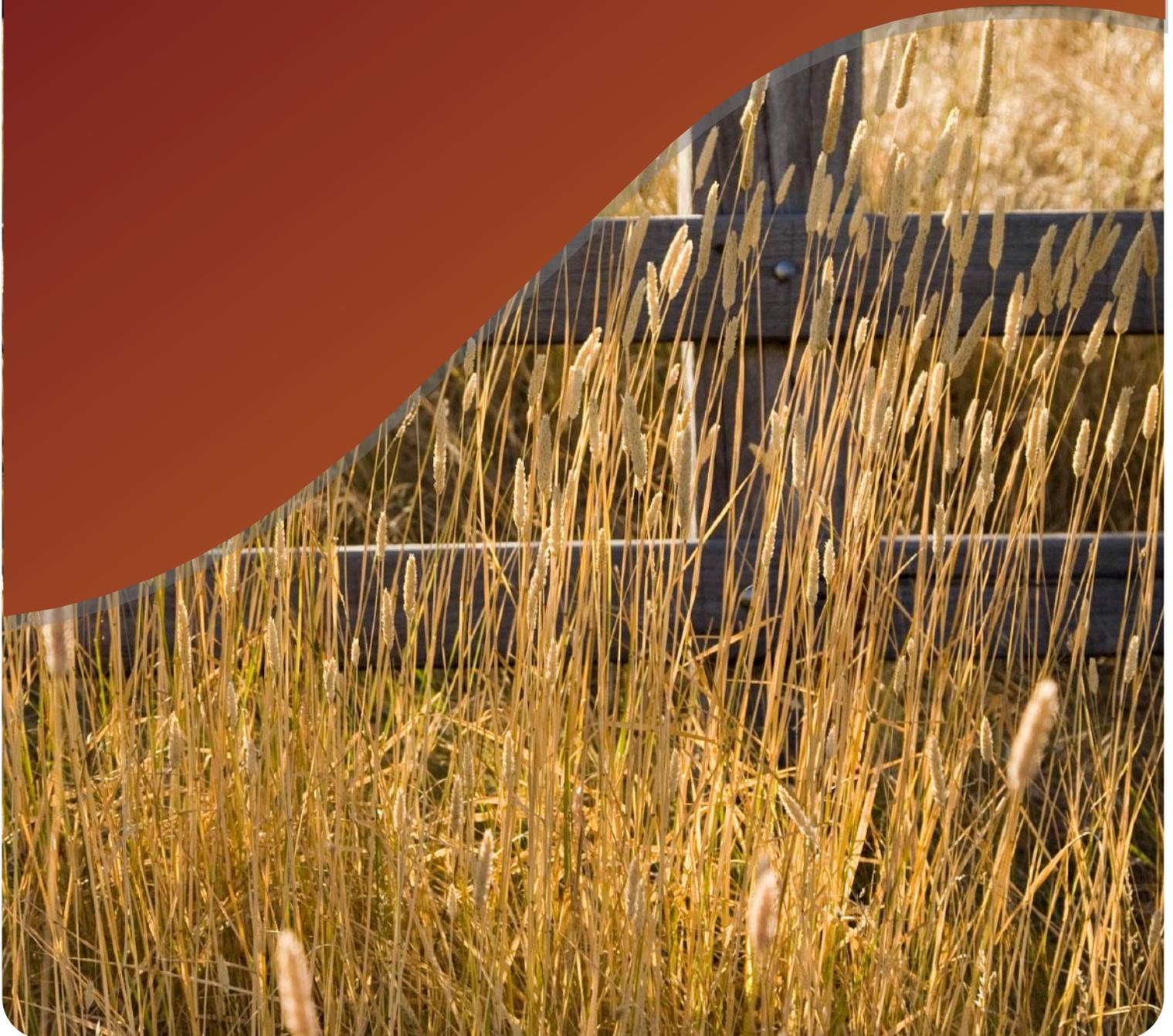




**Macedon  
Ranges**  
Shire Council

**Submission to National Transport  
Commission Issues Paper –  
*Barriers to the safe use of innovative  
vehicles and mobility devices***



# Submission from Macedon Ranges Shire Council to National Transport Commission Issues paper – Barriers to the safe use of innovative vehicles and mobility devices

## Questions from the Issues Paper

1. *What characteristics need to be considered when defining what an innovative vehicle is?*

### Comment

- Does it offer benefits, such as using less resources, lower financial cost, and reduced road congestion?
- Is it actually a 'vehicle' and not a toy or other type of device that should not be considered for use on roads?
- Do clear and consistent rules already exist for that type of vehicle?
- Does the vehicle positively change/transform mobility options? Is there a link between low/no participation and increased opportunity through provision of the vehicle?
- Can it be produced/ maintained at a cost that is reasonable/ achievable to market?
- What supporting technology is needed, and can this be available regardless of user's location?
- Can it function across a variety of terrains or is it very specialised to certain locations?
- Is it likely to appeal to a narrow market segment, or be of interest/value to the broad community?

2. *What differences between motorised wheelchairs and mobility scooters need to be recognised by this project?*

### Comment

- Users of motorised wheelchairs are more likely to require assistance or specialised equipment to get into and out of the wheelchair. Therefore, when the person arrives at a destination their wheelchair usually needs to go in with them whereas a mobility scooter is generally left outside venues such as shop, medical surgery, social club and other areas with limited space. Parking for mobility scooters is therefore a factor to consider in public spaces and community facilities.
- If some incident occurs (for example wheelchair breaks down, there is an obstacle preventing passage, the person becomes ill) the user of a motorised wheelchair may not be able to get out and walk a few steps to a safe place or alternative transport.
- Motorised wheelchairs are often customised and a person other than the usual user may not easily be able to move them to a safe location if there is a problem of any kind.
- The type of terrain that they can negotiate may differ.
- Some MMDs may be more adaptable to use in inclement weather.
- Children may use motorised wheelchairs – some special requirements would apply.

3. *What uses of innovative vehicles need to be considered as part of this investigation?*

**Comment**

- Use of innovative vehicles on public roads, road-related areas, public spaces, public transport and surrounds such as stations.
- Use of innovative vehicles for commuting, social and recreational use, business use, tourism, health-related activities, medical appointments.
- New vehicles that are flexible for use in multiple environments such as on road, wet areas, event areas, on public transport.

4. *What key factors need to be considered when determining safe rules of operation (including speed) for innovative vehicles on roads and road-related areas?*

**Comment**

- Type of road, road-related area
- Type, volume and speed of other vehicular traffic travelling in or passing through the area.
- Pedestrians (type, volume, peak and quiet times).
- Lighting (in area and on vehicle).
- Training/skills/ licencing of users.
- Obstacles that may affect innovative vehicles, including potholes and uneven surfaces.
- Visibility for the innovative vehicle and for others to see the innovative vehicle.
- Characteristics of the vehicle operator (age, hearing, vision, judgement, physical capacity, cognitive factors, illness that may impact on ability to operate safely eg seizures, breathlessness).
- Signage.
- Expectations/knowledge of all users of the area around what vehicles they share the area with, important to have an awareness campaign targeting all.
- Mitigating impact such as noise, safe parking of the vehicles, security aspects (eg are lockable racks needed?).

5. *What are the practical and measurable outcomes required from a nationally-consistent policy and regulatory framework for innovative vehicles?*

**Comment**

- Outcome - People know what is allowed and required regarding use of innovative vehicles and MMDs. Users of innovative vehicles and MMDs need to have **effective** access to clear information about laws, rules and policies. This would include a campaign for new information and an ongoing communication strategy.
- Outcome –A reduction in accidents and injuries relating to use of innovative vehicles and MMDs.

- Outcome – Innovative vehicles and MMDs that are available for sale in Australia meet requirements for legal use.
- Outcome – There is an increase in use of innovative vehicles and MMDs (leading to more opportunities for inclusion and social activities for people who have limited transport alternatives; cost savings for individuals; environmental benefits of reduced car use; reduced traffic congestion).

6. What evidence-based distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable levels of risk associated with the use of innovative vehicles could be considered to inform the way innovative vehicles are regulated?

**Comment**

- Are evidence-based distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable levels of risk used to inform the way other vehicles, eg bicycles and cars, are regulated? Could the same distinctions be used?

7. What barriers and health or safety risks are associated with the use of a motorised mobility device that does not meet the needs of a user because of the current restrictions?

**Comment**

- Current restrictions that mean MMDs do not meet the specific needs of a user may create difficulties for the user in safely operating the vehicle or may impact the user’s health, comfort or ability to make optimum use of the MMD.

8. How do current classifications of drivers of wheelchairs as both ‘pedestrians’ and ‘vehicles’ in the Australian Road Rules create confusion?

**Comment**

- Make it difficult to determine what regulations, rules and responsibilities apply to the person and to enforce these – may not be agreed whether the wheelchair ‘cannot travel over 10km/hr’.
- May be insurance implications, including third party insurance.

9. Is there a need for construction and performance requirements for motorised mobility devices to ensure safe use on public transport infrastructure?

**Comment**

- MMDs need to have construction and performance features that ensure they can safely access stations, stops and (accessible) public transport vehicles.
- MMDs also need to have construction and performance features that ensure they can be safely and efficiently immobilised while in a public transport vehicle and can be operated safely on platforms or at stops.

10. What evidence is available on the road safety risks associated with motorised mobility devices that could be used to inform the way motorised mobility devices are regulated?

**Comment**

- Some data on accidents, and death, injuries and insurance claims resulting from accidents, involving innovative vehicles or MMDs.

**Other suggestions for comment**

- Has the problem been accurately identified?

**Comment**

- If the problem is ‘that there are regulatory barriers to the safe use of innovative vehicles and MMDs’ then it has been accurately identified for this purpose.
- What are the likely costs and operational consequences of the problem for government bodies, businesses/operators and other organisations?

**Comment**

- Increasing use of MMDs and innovative vehicles has significant implications for local government because of the role of local government in funding, managing and maintaining many of the areas where these vehicles travel/would travel. The built environment would need to be modified substantially to safely accommodate MMDs and innovative vehicles. This is particularly challenging in heritage areas and where space is at a premium.
- Costs of licensing and registering and the monitoring of ongoing safety of vehicle and capacity of user.
- There may be cost involved in mitigating impact such as noise, safety issues resulting from shared use of precincts.
- Rural areas have specific issues due to the type of roads and road-related areas, the type of vehicles encountered on these roads, speed of travel, wildlife and other potential hazards.
- The potential benefits of increased use of innovative vehicles and MMDs in rural areas is particularly important because of the very limited public transport options in these areas.
- Regulatory barriers may be preventing some people from using cheaper, more resource-friendly transport option.
- Levels of congestion and pollution from cars may be greater than necessary because people have no practical options.
- People needing MMDs may not be accessing social opportunities because regulations are restrictive or unclear.
- Accidents may be happening that could be avoided with better regulation.

- What are the likely costs and operational impacts of the problem on the broader community?

**Comment**

- See previous question comments.

- Is government action needed?

**Comment**

- As the inconsistencies, confusion and other barriers relating to use of innovative vehicles and MMDs are at least partly related to government regulation and policy it will be necessary for governments to take action to clarify and resolve these issues.
- Governments are the bodies responsible for laws and regulation and therefore government action will be needed.

- What are the broad options for reform?
- Are there issues that have not been identified in the paper?