



Information Sheet

Scooters: safe use within the community

When using a scooter in the community there are important factors to consider to ensure the safety of the user and other members of the public.

Under the Australian road rules, motorised wheelchairs and scooters (also referred to as *gophers*) are given the same consideration.



Scooter users are classified as pedestrians:

If the scooter is not capable of travelling faster than 10km per hour (on level ground), and is being used by a person who has difficulty walking, then the same road rules as a pedestrian must be observed. This means:

- ▶ Travelling on the footpath/nature strip if one is provided and in good condition
- ▶ Following the same rules as pedestrians if having to travel along the road, namely, keeping to the far left or far right and giving way to traffic as required
- ▶ Crossing the road at traffic lights and pedestrian crossings. Choose open areas, and avoid crossing from behind parked cars or other obstructions.

For more detailed information, refer to the section for pedestrians in the *Australian Road Rules* which can be downloaded at www.ntc.gov.au.

What if the scooter can travel at a speed greater than 10km/h?

If the scooter is capable of travelling faster than 10km per hour it can only be used on a public footpath if:

- ▶ It is not driven at a speed faster than 10km per hour, *and*
- ▶ The scooter has an unladen weight which does not exceed 110kg, *and*
- ▶ The user has a physical condition with a reasonable need to use the scooter.

Is registration or a licence required to use a scooter?

A scooter user is exempt from registration and licensing requirements as long as:

- ▶ There is a physical condition which requires the use of a scooter to maintain independence, *and*
- ▶ The scooter is specifically designed and constructed for the transport of a person with a physical disability, *and*
- ▶ The scooter has seating for one person only, *and*

- ▶ The scooter is capable of short, low speed journeys only, *and*
- ▶ The weight of the scooter does not exceed 250kg.

Users of scooters with an unladen mass over 250kg are not exempt from requirements to hold a driver's licence, vehicle registration or insurance.

What if the scooter is going to be driven at night time?

A number of lights need to be fitted to use a scooter at night time, including:

- ▶ A white light at the front
- ▶ A red light at the rear (red reflectors at the rear are also recommended).

Wearing bright or light coloured clothing will also help improve your visibility.

Does the scooter need to be insured?

Scooter users who have a legitimate need for the scooter may receive free Third Party Bodily Insurance through the Motor Accident Commission. No prior registration is required. This covers any injuries sustained by another person as a result of an accident involving a scooter user. It does not cover any injury that the scooter user may sustain or the cost of any damage to the scooter or the other person's vehicle or property.

For insurance cover for damage to property, the scooter, or injuries sustained by the scooter user, it is important to seek advice from an insurance company.

When will Third Party Bodily Insurance not be proved to its full extent?

- ▶ If the scooter user is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. It is important to check common side effects of prescription medications with a doctor
- ▶ If the scooter is carrying more than one person or a load in excess of what the scooter is able to carry
- ▶ If the scooter is unsafe, damaged or was being used inappropriately
- ▶ Excess payments may be required in accidents where the scooter user is seen to be more than 25 per cent responsible.

For further information on Scooter insurance or how to claim Third Party Bodily Insurance, contact the Motor Accident Commission (MAC) on 8422 8100.

Can scooters be taken into shops or accessible toilets?

It is expected that scooter users will be able to walk short distances if required and can independently transfer on and off the scooter. This means that:

- ▶ Small shops may not have space for a scooter, so it may need to be left outside
- ▶ Accessible toilets are not designed for the size of a scooter. They are only accessible for wheelchairs
- ▶ Lifts may not have adequate turning space, requiring scooters to reverse in/out.

Can scooters be used on public transport?

Some scooters can be used on buses, trains and taxis that have disability access. However, there are guidelines which should be considered:

- ▶ The maximum allocated space for transportation of a scooter on accessible taxis and various modes of public transport is 800mm x 1300mm. This size should be considered before purchasing a scooter
- ▶ For safety reasons, to access public transport via a boarding ramp the combined weight of the scooter and user must not exceed 300kg
- ▶ When travelling in a car or access taxi the user must sit in an appropriate car seat with seat belt. The scooter can be carried in the boot or cargo area.

To safely manoeuvre a scooter onto public transport it should be able to:

- ▶ Turn 180 degrees within an area of 2070mm by 1540mm
- ▶ Cross a horizontal gap up to 40 mm wide
- ▶ Negotiate a taxi door height of 1400mm

It is also important that the braking system is effective to maintain stability.

For further information on scooter use within the community and on public transport contact the Department of Transport Energy and Infrastructure on 13 10 84. You can also download their information brochure entitled *Motorised wheelchairs—Safety and the Law* from their website at: www.transport.sa.gov.au

General tips for safe use of a scooter

- ▶ Good eyesight, hearing, strength and balance are all required to manoeuvre a scooter safely. The ability to problem solve and make quick decisions is also important. If unsure, see a GP or occupational therapist for advice.
- ▶ Plan ahead and avoid busy areas and traffic times. Be courteous and share space.
- ▶ Choose the right speed. Just because a scooter is allowed to travel up to 10 km/h does not mean that this is the most appropriate speed for the environment.
- ▶ Travel up/down ramps or inclines as straight as possible (not at an angle) and slow down when turning corners to avoid becoming unstable. Keep feet on footpads.
- ▶ Always use a safety flag. This alerts other vehicles to the scooter's presence.
- ▶ Ensure the key is turned off and taken out before getting on or off a scooter. This ensures that if the controls are accidentally knocked the scooter will not move.
- ▶ Never drive a scooter with under-inflated tyres—this greatly compromises stability and efficiency. The recommended pressure should be marked on the scooter tyres.
- ▶ Never drive a scooter with the seat higher than necessary. Lower seats provide better stability. Before moving, ensure the seat is in the locked position.

- ▶ Avoid carrying excessive loads in the basket as this can interfere with steering or cause the scooter to overbalance. Make sure weight is distributed evenly.
- ▶ Look and Listen—stay alert. Use a horn as necessary. Have rear vision mirrors and a safety flag fitted. Always observe the path in front and watch for uneven surfaces and obstructions. Use caution over rough or congested areas.
- ▶ Avoid temporary structures such as wooden platforms or ramps unless sure they can withstand the combined weight of user and scooter.
- ▶ Get to know the scooter's capabilities. Be aware of stopping distances, particularly on wet surfaces. Consider endurance and battery life—plan ahead.
- ▶ Make sure the scooter is stored undercover in a secure place and the battery is recharged in a well ventilated area when not in use. Scooter batteries prefer to be overcharged rather than undercharged.
- ▶ Avoid using a scooter in the rain as this may interfere with its electronics. Keep food and drinks away from the control box and electrical fittings. If the scooter does become wet, wipe it dry as soon as possible.

Different states within Australia may have individual regulations governing scooter use within their local community. When travelling interstate with a scooter it is important to contact the local State or Territory Passenger Transport Regulator for more specific information.

Contacting the Independent Living Centre

For further information or to make an appointment to visit the display please contact the Independent Living Centre.

The Independent Living Centre offers free advice on equipment and techniques to help you with everyday tasks.

Independent Living Centre
11 Blacks Road
Gilles Plains SA 5086

Phone: 1300 885 886 (SA & NT callers only) or 8266 5260

Fax: 8266 5263

Email: ilcsa@dfc.sa.gov.au

Website: www.sa.gov.au/disability/ilc

Accessible off street parking is available.

Bus routes:

From the city T500/T501 or 207/208 to Stop 28 Sudholz Road

Timetable information: 8210 1000

