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**Fact Sheet on Bicycles Travelling on Footpaths**

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**Background**

Each state and territory has its own road rules regarding the use of bicycles on footpaths. As bicycles pose a danger to pedestrians, particularly those who are blind or vision impaired, this fact sheet outlines the relevant road rules in each jurisdiction.

Electric bicycles (also known as ‘e-bikes’) are becoming increasingly popular. According to one Sydney-based bicycle retailer, fat-tyred e-bikes are currently outselling standard pushbikes by four to one, with teenagers accounting for most of those sales.[[1]](#endnote-1)

‘Fat bikes’ are physically imposing, boasting tyres two to four times the width those on a standard pushbike and, on certain models, a seat large enough to accommodate a passenger.

E-bikes are usually permitted to travel in the same places as standard pushbikes. State and territory regulations typically limit power-assisted bicycles to 200 watts and pedalecs to 250 watts.[[2]](#endnote-2) Illegal modifications can be made with relative ease, however, to exceed those power limits.

**New South Wales**

Standard pushbikes

Bicycle riders aged 16 years and over must not ride on a footpath unless they are:

* An adult supervising a child under the age of 16;
* Accompanying a child under the age of 16 where all children are under the supervision of an adult;
* A postal worker riding a bicycle in the course of their work duties;
* A rider carrying a child under 10 as a passenger;
* A rider with a medical condition who is carrying a medical certificate that states a medical practitioner believes the rider should be allowed to ride on the footpath; or
* A rider accompanying a rider with a medical condition.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Bicycle riders must dismount and walk across pedestrian crossings except where bicycle crossing lights are installed.

E-bikes

E-bike riders follow the same road rules as those on standard pushbikes. Two types of e-bikes are permitted in New South Wales: power-assisted pedal cycles and electrically power-assisted cycles.[[4]](#endnote-4)

A power-assisted pedal cycle:

* Has one or more motors attached with a combined maximum power output of up to 200 watts;
* Cannot be propelled only by the motor(s);
* Weighs less than 50kg (including batteries); and
* Has a height-adjustable seat.

An electrically power-assisted cycle has a maximum continued rated power of up to 500 watts. This power output must be:

* Progressively reduced as the bicycle’s speed increases beyond 6km/h; and
* Cut off when:
	+ The bicycle reaches a speed of 25km/h; or
	+ The rider stops pedalling and the speed exceeds 6km/h.

All petrol-powered bicycles are illegal on NSW roads and road-related areas like footpaths, shared paths, cycle ways and cycle paths.

**Victoria**

Standard pushbikes
Children aged 12 years or younger can ride on footpaths. People older than this may ride on a footpath if they are riding with a child aged 12 or younger.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Adults aged 18 years or older can also ride on the footpath with a young child in a bike seat attached to the bike.

People riding on footpaths must always give way to pedestrians.

Shared paths are used by people walking and people riding. This includes joggers, people on scooters and dog walkers.

On shared paths, riders must keep left and give way to people on foot. Riders must slow down around pedestrians and use their bell or call out to let people know they are passing. Riders must leave space when passing so other path users feel safe.

E-bikes

E-bike riders follow the same road rules as those on standard pushbikes.[[6]](#endnote-6) There are two definitions of e-bikes in Victoria:

* A bicycle with one or more auxiliary motors attached which has a combined maximum ungoverned continuous rated power output not exceeding 200 watts; or
* An electrically power-assisted cycle (EPAC). These are pedal cycles with an electric motor that has a maximum continued rated power of 250 watts. The power-assistance progressively reduces as the speed increases and cuts off once a top speed of 25km/h is reached. EPACs require the rider to pedal to access the power.

A motorised bicycle is not classed as a bicycle if:

* The motor is not an auxiliary source of power (a person must still be able to propel the bicycle via pedals without the motor operating).
* The motor's power output exceeds 200 watts (whether or not the motor is operating) unless it is an EPAC.

The above are classed as motorcycles. The rider will be required to hold a motorcycle licence and have the vehicle registered before it can be used on the road network. Motorcycles cannot be ridden on footpaths or bicycle paths.

**Queensland**

Standard pushbikes
Bicycle riding is permitted on the footpath in Queensland.[[7]](#endnote-7) The relevant legislation states that ‘The rider of a bicycle riding on a footpath or shared path must:

* 1. keep to the left of the footpath or shared path unless it is impracticable to do so; and
	2. give way to any pedestrian on the footpath or shared path.’

E-bikes

E-bikes are permitted on all Queensland roads and paths, except where bicycles are prohibited. E-bike riders follow the same road rules as those on standard pushbikes.[[8]](#endnote-8)

For an e-bike to be legally used on the road, it must have an electric motor and be one of the following:

* A bicycle with an electric motor(s) capable of generating no more than 200 watts of power in total, and the motor is pedal-assist only; or
* A pedalec with an electric motor capable of generating up to 250 watts of power, but whose motor cuts out at 25km/h and whose pedals must be used to keep the motor operating. Pedalecs must comply with the European Standard for Power Assisted Pedal Cycles (EN15194) and must have a permanent marking on it that shows it complies with this standard.

A motorised bike is non-compliant and cannot be ridden on public roads or paths if it has any of the following:

* A petrol-powered or internal combustion engine
* An electric motor capable of generating over 200 watts (that isn't a pedalec); or
* An electric motor that is the primary source of power.

**Western Australia**

Standard pushbikes
Cyclists of all ages may ride on footpaths in Western Australia, unless otherwise signed.[[9]](#endnote-9) Cyclists must ride in single file on footpaths. Pedestrians, including mobility scooters and motorised wheelchair users, always have right of way.

Cyclists should use their bell to alert other shared path users that a bicycle is approaching. Cyclists should use their bell to alert pedestrians/mobility scooter operators/motorised wheelchair users that a bicycle is approaching.

Cyclists and eRiders no longer need to dismount at pedestrian crossings and can simply ride across. This new rule applies when the rider enters the crossing from the connected path and not the road. Riders must not exceed 10km/h and give way to any pedestrians when riding over the crossing.

E-bikes
The use of e-bikes is limited on footpaths in Western Australia. Riders must be 16 years of age to use them on either roads or footpaths. Riders cannot travel above 25km/h on any road or above 10km/h on footpaths.[[10]](#endnote-10)

**South Australia**

Standard pushbikes
Cyclists in South Australia can ride two abreast on a carriageway not more than 1.5 metres apart, but any more than two riding abreast is an offence.[[11]](#endnote-11) Cyclists of all ages are allowed to ride on footpaths.

Shared facilities for both pedestrians and cyclists called ‘shared paths’ are designated by signs or line marking. Cyclists riding a footpath or shared path must keep left unless it is impractical to do so.

E-bikes
Riders of e-bikes in South Australia are bound by the same rules as for other bicycles.[[12]](#endnote-12) There are two categories of power-assisted bicycles that may be legally used on South Australian roads:

* Power-assisted pedal cycles, which have an electric motor(s) with a combined maximum power output of up to 200 watts and are not propelled by only the motors; and
* Electrically power-assisted cycles, which have a maximum continuous electric power output not exceeding 250 watts and are not propelled only by the motor.

Any bicycle with an internal combustion engine fitted is not a power-assisted bicycle and cannot be ridden on South Australian roads or road-related areas.

**Tasmania**

Standard pushbikes
Bicycles may be ridden on the footpath in Tasmania unless there is a ‘no bicycles’ sign.[[13]](#endnote-13) Children under the age of 12 can ride on any footpath.

Cyclists must give way to pedestrians and ride in a manner that does not inconvenience or endanger others. Cyclists are allowed to ride alongside another bicycle rider at not more than 1.5 metres apart, but cannot ride more than two abreast.

Cyclists are allowed to cross at pedestrian crossings but must stop as near as practical to the crossing. Then cyclists should ride across slowly and safely, giving way to pedestrians.

E-bikes
There are two categories of e-bikes permitted in Tasmania:

* A bicycle primarily propelled through pedalling with an auxiliary motor capable of generating no more than 200 watts; and
* An electrically power-assisted bicycle (EPAC) with a maximum continuous rated power of 250 watts where the power assistance:
* Is progressively reduced as the travel speed increases above 6km/h; or
	+ Is cut off when a speed of 25 km/h is reached, or the cyclist is not pedaling and the travel speed exceeds 6 km/h.

The road rules for bicycles apply to these categories of e-bikes.[[14]](#endnote-14)

The Vehicle and Traffic (Regulatory Reforms) Amendment Bill 2023 currently before the Tasmanian Parliament proposes to make amendments to the Vehicle and Traffic Act 1999 and Road Rules 2019 to make petrol-powered bicycles illegal to use on roads and road-related areas such as footpaths, shared paths, and cycle ways.

**Australian Capital Territory**

Standard pushbikes
Cyclists may ride on the footpath in the Australian Capital Territory.[[15]](#endnote-15) Cyclists must:

* Give way to pedestrians on footpaths;
* Signal their approach when behind pedestrians on a shared path or footpath, and slow down when overtaking them;
* Increase their visibility; and
* Be considerate and courteous of other road users at all times.

E-bikes
E-bike riders in the Australian Capital Territory must follow the same road rules as for pedal cycles without motors.[[16]](#endnote-16)

Motor assisted pedal cycles with electric engines are exempt from registration, provided the maximum engine output power does not exceed 200 watts. These vehicles must have been designed as a bicycle – that is, to be propelled by human power, with the motor attached as a supplementary aid only.

Pedalecs are also exempt from registration. A pedalec is a type of electric bicycle where the rider's pedalling is assisted by a small electric motor. They have a maximum of 250 watts continuous rated power and must be pedalled to gain power assistance, have a maximum powered speed of 25km/h and may have a 6km/h twist and go capability without pedalling, to assist in propelling the vehicle forwards.

**Northern Territory**

Standard pushbikes
Cyclists in the Northern Territory must follow these rules to make sure they safely share the footpath or bike path with other users:

* Keep to the left of any oncoming bicycle rider or pedestrian;
* Give way to pedestrians; and
* Use their bell or horn to warn others, especially when riding up behind them.[[17]](#endnote-17)

Cyclists are permitted to ride slowly across a road on a children's crossing or pedestrian crossing. Riding slowly means at a walking pace.

At crossings, cyclists must do the following:

* Give way to pedestrians on crossings; and
* Only ride across a signalised crossing if it is showing a green bicycle and/ or green pedestrian crossing light.

E-bikes

E-bikes must be ridden in the same manner as regular bicycles. Riders can hire e-bikes in the Darwin area, under an agreement with Neuron Mobility and the City of Darwin.[[18]](#endnote-18)

1. ABC News, “Fat Bikes Numbers in Sydney on the Rise, but E-Rideable Safety Sparks Concern,” 13 September 2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-13/fat-bike-boom-in-sydney-sparks-safety-fears/102823330>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. E Ride Solutions, “Are E-Bikes Legal in Australia? Electric Bike Laws and Regulations,” 30 June 2022, <https://www.eridesolutions.com.au/blogs/news/are-e-bikes-legal-in-australia-electric-bike-laws-and-regulations>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. NSW Government, “Road Rules for Bicycle Riders,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/driving-boating-and-transport/roads-safety-and-rules/bicycle-safety-and-rules/cyclist-road-rules>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. NSW Government, “E-Bikes and Petrol-Powered Bicycles,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/bicycle-riders/ebikes> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Vic Roads, “Road Rules for Riding a Bike In Victoria,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/cyclist-safety/adult-bike-ed-road-rules-for-riding-a-bike-in-victoria>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Vic Roads, “Power Assisted Bicycles,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/cyclist-safety/power-assisted-bicycles> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Queensland Government, “Bicycle Road Rules and Safety,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/safety/rules/wheeled-devices/bicycle>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Queensland Government, “Electric Bicycle Rules,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/safety/rules/wheeled-devices/electric-bicycle-rules>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Government of Western Australia, “Cyclists,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/road-safety-commission/cyclists>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Yahoo! News, “Surging ‘Deadly’ Trend Prompts Crackdown from Aussie Police,” 23 February 2023, <https://au.news.yahoo.com/surging-deadly-trend-prompts-crackdown-from-aussie-police-054550037.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Legal Services Commission South Australia, “Cyclists,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.lawhandbook.sa.gov.au/ch12s08s05s04.php> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. SA.GOV.AU, “Riding a Power-Assisted Bicycle,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/driving-and-transport/cycling/riding-a-power-assisted-bicycle>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Tasmanian Government, “Tasmanian Road Rules,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/358278/413398_-_Tasmanian_Road_Rules_2022.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Tasmanian Government, “Power Assisted Bicycles (E-Bikes),” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/road_safety_and_rules/power_assisted_bicycles_e-bikes> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. ACT Government, “How to Share Roads and Paths,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/travel-options/walking-and-cycling/cycling/how-to-sharing-roads-and-paths>
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16. ACT Government, “Alternate Vehicles and Motorised Devices,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/article/alternate-vehicles-and-motorised-devices-tab-overview>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. NT.GOV.AU, “Bicycle Safety,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://nt.gov.au/driving/safety/bicycle-safety>
 [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. NT.GOV.AU, “Electric Scooters and Bikes,” accessed 14 September 2023, <https://nt.gov.au/driving/safety/electric-scooters-and-bikes> [↑](#endnote-ref-18)