

city of
Victor Harbor



Motorised Scooter Awareness





This booklet was produced by the City of Victor Harbor, with assistance from Melanie Dennis (Country Occupational Therapy Services), Council's Disability Access Advisory Committee in June 2010. It has since been updated in 2013, 2018 and 2021.



Motorised scooters (also referred to as gophers, electric mobility aids or motorised wheelchairs) are often used by people who find it difficult to walk or propel a wheelchair over long distances.

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.

This booklet aims to give practical advice to those considering, or currently using a motorised scooter. It covers:

- Abilities required to operate a motorised scooter safely
- Road rules that apply to using a scooter
- Registration and licensing
- Insurance, injury and damage
- Selecting a scooter and maintenance
- Safety tips and planning a safe route
- Frequently asked questions and where to get more information

Abilities required to operate a scooter safely

If used safely, a motorised scooter can provide independence for people who find it difficult to walk or use a wheelchair over long distances. However, if not used appropriately, there are safety issues with scooters.

Between 2006 and 2016 there were around 69 deaths in Australia directly related to accidents involving motorised scooters, and between 2011 and 2016 more than 4600 people were admitted to hospital for scooter related injury. (AIHW)

To operate a scooter safely, you need adequate hearing, vision, concentration, coordination, perception, memory, reaction time, strength, movement and balance.

To drive a scooter safely and independently you are required to be able to mobilise short distances, with or without a walking aid, and also transfer to and from your scooter. You need to consider other mobility devices and if these need to be carried on the scooter with you.

You also need to be able to plan, judge speed, problem solve and make quick decisions when using a scooter.

If you have a medical condition, or anything else, that may affect safe scooter driving, it is advisable to consult a health professional (Doctor or Occupational Therapist) before purchasing a scooter.

You must not operate a scooter if you are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. You should also check the side effects of any prescription or over the counter medications you may be taking with your doctor or pharmacist.

Road rules that apply to using a scooter

Scooter users are classified as pedestrians. Under the Australian Road Rules, a person using a mobility scooter is classed as a pedestrian if the maximum speed on level ground does not exceed 10km/h.

This means the rider:

- Must observe the same road rules that apply to pedestrians

- Must use the footpath or nature strip when one is provided
- If travelling on a road, must keep as far to the side of the road as possible and travel facing approaching traffic unless not practicable
- Can use shared paths, off road bike paths, indoor shopping malls but must not travel in bike lanes
- Must cross the road at pedestrian lights and traffic lights
- Must not cross from behind parked cars or other obstructions
- Must not cause a traffic hazard or obstruct any driver or other road user.

If the scooter is capable of travelling faster than 10km/h, it can only be used on a footpath if:

- It is not driven faster than 10km/h,
- Does not have an un-laden weight exceeding 110 kgs, and
- Is being used by a person with a physical condition with

a reasonable need to use the motorised scooter.

Registration and Licensing

In South Australia, you do not need a driver's licence and registration as long as the following conditions are met:

- You have a physical condition that reasonably requires you to use the scooter to maintain independence
- The scooter is specifically designed and constructed (not merely adapted) for the transport of a person with a physical disability
- It has seating for one person only
- It is capable of short low speed journeys only, and
- The un-laden weight of the scooter does not exceeding 250 kilograms.

Users of scooters that weigh more than 250 kilograms are not exempt from the requirement to hold a driver's licence, vehicle registration and insurance.

Insurance, injury and damage

The Compulsory Third Party (CTP) Insurance Regulator provides users of motorised scooters with Third Party Bodily Injury Insurance cover at no cost. No application is required.

However, the insurance only covers your legal liability for injury to other people as a result of an accident involving your scooter. It does not cover any injury you may sustain, the cost of any damage to the other person's vehicle and/or property, or your scooter. Excess payments may be required in accidents where the scooter user is seen to be more than 25% responsible.

It is recommended to talk to your insurance company about appropriate cover you may need.

You will not be covered by Third Party Bodily Injury Insurance if:

- You are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. You may need to check the common side effects of some prescription medications with your doctor or pharmacist.

- You are carrying passengers, or a load in excess of what the scooter is able to carry.
- Your scooter is unsafe, damaged or being used inappropriately.

Visit www.ctp.sa.gov.au for details of the CTP Insurance Scheme.

Selecting a scooter

It is important to understand the features and differences between various scooters before purchasing. You should also think about your own abilities, and the environment in which the scooter will be used (e.g. outdoors, indoors, steep areas, rough roads, long distances, and if it needs to be dismantled for transport).

Scooter selection requires careful consideration of many things, such as the size of the scooter, number of wheels, suspension, accessories, warranty, availability of spare parts, and storage.

An information sheet on scooter selection is available from the Independent Living Centre of South Australia at 1300 885 886 or information@ilcsa.com.au



Maintenance

Carefully read instruction manuals from the manufacturer before use, and follow their instructions for operation and maintenance.

It is recommended that you have your scooter regularly serviced and that safety checks are undertaken on a regular basis.

Do not make any modifications to your scooter as changes may create safety and/or legal issues, however you may consider fitting headlights for extra visibility.


Safety tips and planning a safe route

When using your motorised scooter on a footpath, it may not always be safe to travel at a speed up to 10km/h. Your speed should be reduced accordingly depending on the conditions of the footpath and other users.

When using your scooter on the road, being seen by other road users is one of the major difficulties faced by all road users. This is due to the size of the scooter relative to other vehicles.

Driving on the footpath is a much safer alternative. However, if you need to drive on or over a road it is recommended that you do so safely by adhering to the following safety tips:

- Plan ahead to avoid busy areas and busy traffic times.
- Be visible - wear bright clothing and display a bicycle flag. Flags are available from most bicycle shops and will assist in making your vehicle more visible to road users.
- It is not recommended that you drive on the road at night, but if you need to do so, you should wear bright reflective clothing and display a white light to the front of the vehicle and a red light to the rear. Red reflectors at the rear are also recommended.
- Never assume that motorists have seen you and will give way. Use pedestrian crossings or cross at open areas with high visibility. If you must travel on the road, keep as close to the left or right as possible.



Other tips for the safe use of a scooter:

- Look for cars entering or exiting driveways, and warn pedestrians as you approach. When travelling in congested areas, use the slowest speed possible.
- Travel up and down ramps or inclines as straight as possible. Do not attempt to go up or down a ramp or incline at an angle, as the scooter could become unstable. Do not make sharp turns as these can cause instability.
- Ensure the key is turned off and taken out before getting on or off your scooter so if the controls are knocked the scooter will not move.
- Keep feet on footpads while in motion, and before moving ensure seat is in the locked position.
- “Be Seen, Be Heard”. Wear safety gear (including bright clothing and safety helmet). Use the horn as necessary. Have a rear vision mirror and safety flag fitted.
- Always observe the path in front of you and watch for uneven surfaces and obstructions.
- Don’t carry excessive loads in your basket as this can interfere with steering or cause the scooter to overbalance. Avoid hanging objects off the handles, and always secure loose clothing.
- Avoid structures such as wooden platforms or ramps unless you are certain they can withstand the combined weight of driver and scooter.
- Carry a mobile phone in case of emergency. Do not use a phone while moving.

You should **never**:

- Drive your scooter with under-inflated tyres. This compromises the stability and efficiency of the scooter.
- Drive your scooter with the seat higher than necessary. The lower the seat, the better the stability.
- Drive on highways, high speed roads, or high traffic areas.



Frequently asked questions

Can I use a scooter on public transport?

Yes, but only on buses, trains and taxis that have disability access. Scooters are much bigger than electric wheelchairs and in some public transport vehicles there is insufficient room to turn a scooter around. You should therefore be confident that you are able to reverse your scooter off transport if required.

Scooters manufactured after July 2018 are required to have blue or white labelling. Blue labels indicate compatibility for footpaths and public transport. White labels indicate compatibility for footpaths only. These scooters can't be used on public transport.

Can I drive a scooter into shops?

Some shops do not have the space needed for scooters, so your scooter would have to be left outside. If there is space to maneuver your scooter then permission should be sought first.

Can I remain seated on my scooter when travelling in a car or access taxi?

If transporting your scooter in a car or access taxi you must sit in a car seat not on the scooter. Information on restraints for the scooter is available from the Independent Living Centre of South Australia at 1300 885 886.

Will a toilet for disabled people accommodate my scooter?

Toilets for people with a disability are not designed for the size of a scooter. They are usually only wheelchair accessible.

Where can I get more information?

This document is not intended to be used as a legal document. Its aim is to set out, in simple form, a summary of the legislative requirements and other considerations that apply to the use of motorised scooters.

If you require a more detailed statement of the law, please refer to the Motor Vehicles Act and Road Traffic Act, and the Australian Road Rules. Copies of the legislation are available at www.legislation.sa.gov.au



For further information on scooter insurance, or how to claim Third Party Bodily Insurance, contact the Compulsory Third Party (CTP) Insurance Regulator by phoning 1300 303 558 or visit www.ctp.sa.gov.au

For further information on scooter use within the community check the Department for Planning, Transport and Infrastructure website at www.dpti.sa.gov.au

For information on accessible public transport contact the Public Transport Authority by phoning 1300 311 108.

For information on local transport contact Link SA on 8532 2633 or visit www.linksa.com.au

The Independent Living Centre has a large display of assistive aids and equipment in its showroom (including scooters) and can provide you with free information and advice.

Independent Living Centre of South Australia is located at 11 Blacks Road, Gilles Plains.

They can be contacted at the following details:

Phone: 1300 885 886 (SA & NT callers only) or (08) 8266 5260

Website: www.ilcaustralia.org.au

Email: ilcsa@sa.gov.au

Information on the location of car parks for disabled parking permit holders, and other useful information, is available from the Council Office or from Council's website www.victor.sa.gov.au



Acknowledgements

The following documents are gratefully acknowledged as sources of information and content for this guide:

- Motorised Mobility Scooters, Moving Right Along, Information Sheet 8, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, Government of South Australia.
- Motorised Wheelchairs, Department for Transport, Planning and Infrastructure, Government of South Australia
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- Mobility Scooter-Related Injuries and Deaths, Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019

Disclaimer

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