

E-SCOOTERS IN BRISBANE – CHANGES IN THE FIRST YEAR SINCE INTRODUCING A SHARED SCHEME

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BACKGROUND: Shared electric scooter (e-scooter) schemes debuted in US cities in 2017 and have spread to many cities worldwide. Rider inexperience and the inexperience of other road users in interacting with e-scooters may be contributing to injuries. Shared e-scooters came to Brisbane, Australia, in November 2018 and our observational study in February 2019 found a high level of non-compliance with regulations by riders of shared, but not private, e-scooters.

AIM: This paper examines whether e-scooter safety improved over time by comparing the numbers and behaviors of shared and private e-scooter riders with a follow-up observational study conducted in October 2019.

METHOD: Riders of e-scooters (and bicycles) were counted at six sites in inner-city Brisbane by trained observers over four weekdays. Type of e-scooter (private, Lime, Neuron), helmet use, gender, age group, riding location, time of day and presence of passengers were recorded.

RESULTS: The number of shared e-scooters observed dropped from 711 in February to 495 in October but the number of private e-scooters increased from 90 to 269, resulting in a slight reduction in the total number of e-scooters. The correct helmet wearing rate increased non-significantly from 61.4% to 66.8% for shared e-scooters and remained high for riders of private e-scooters (95.5% in February and 94.3% in October). The percentage of e-scooters ridden on the road (which is illegal in central Brisbane) remained roughly the same (shared: 6.6% in February, 4.2% in October; private: 4.5% in February, 4.9% in October). The percentage of children and adolescents (illegally) riding shared e-scooters fell from 10.3% to 6.7%. The prevalence of any of these illegal behaviors among shared e-scooter riders fell significantly for shared e-scooter riders from 49.6% to 39.1% while the prevalence of illegal behaviors by other riders remained lower and did not change.

CONCLUSIONS: The reduction in illegal behavior among shared e-scooter riders accompanied by the tripling of usage of private e-scooters suggests that e-scooter safety is likely to have improved.