

stay safe



Cairns
Regional
COUNCIL

mobility guide



Stay Safe!

Motorised scooters and wheelchairs are a great way to move around independently if you cannot walk or you have difficulty walking.



However it is important to take certain precautions to prevent accidents.

Before heading off...

You can make your journey safer and more enjoyable by:

- Making sure batteries are fully charged. Be aware of the length of time a fully charged battery will last;
- Checking your tyre pressure, as an under inflated tyre can affect your stability;
- Ensuring that you haven't recently taken any medication or alcohol that may affect your judgement;
- Making sure the seat is at the right level and that the seat assembly is locked before moving off;

- Using a hat and sunscreen if it is sunny and you don't have a shade cover;
- Ensuring that any rain cover you are using doesn't affect your vision. Never allow the controls of your machine to become wet;
- Take a mobile phone in case of an emergency.

Know your machine...

For details about routine maintenance, such as recharging the battery and the tyre pressure, check your owner's manual. Your manual should also list details about the maximum gradient your machine can climb. Never ride your machine, on an incline greater than the manual's rating.

If you don't have rear vision mirrors, think about installing them – this is especially important if you have a limited range of movement in your neck.



Before heading off...

BE SEEN!

When you use a scooter or wheelchair, you are sitting lower than a walking pedestrian which means you may not be seen as easily by drivers and pedestrians on foot. You can make yourself more visible by:

- Wearing bright coloured clothing or a high visibility vest (i.e. orange or yellow);
- Attaching a fluorescent orange visibility flag (at least head height when standing), to your scooter or wheelchair;
- Using lights if you have them. If your scooter or wheelchair doesn't have lights think about fitting them. Bicycle lights are good and help with day time visibility too. Lights should be clearly visible to road users for at least 200 metres;
- Fitting reflectors or special fluorescent or reflective tape to the front, back, sides and wheels. Many of these items are available to local bike shops or your scooter or wheelchair providers;
- Taking extra care in poor light. The risk of accidents increases greatly so avoid travelling at dusk, in bad weather and at night.

A safe route...

Motorised scooter and electric wheelchair users are classed as pedestrians under current traffic laws therefore you must travel on the footpath or an off road bicycle path whenever possible.

However, there may be times when you will need to travel on the road, for example, where there are footpaths, at crossing places or where there are hazards such as overhanging branches. Try to find the easiest and safest routes to use and if a particular route is difficult, ask your local council if they can help make it safer.

And some tips for safe travelling:

- You will find travelling is more enjoyable if you avoid busy roads and use quieter streets. As always, before crossing ANY road, always stop at the kerb, look and listen for traffic. Return to the footpath as soon as possible;
- Try to establish eye contact with oncoming drivers;
- Watch out for cars going in and out of driveways.



A safe route...

- Avoid hills, however if this isn't possible, slow down and use extreme caution;
- Country roads need special care as vehicles travel at high speeds and road edges can be rough;

- Don't make sharp turns at full throttle;
- Never travel up to the rear of a parked car in case it suddenly reverses;
- Go straight up or down ramps and kerbs and not at an angle. Don't use temporary ramps or platforms as they may not withstand the weight of you and the scooter or wheelchair;
- Only cross a level crossing if there are suitable pedestrian facilities available.

And some tips for safe stopping:

- Always turn the key to the off position or hit the off button when you are getting on or off your vehicle;
- Don't stop on an incline even to rest;
- Be mindful where you stop or park. Never block a building entrance or driveway.



Sharing the footpath and avoiding footpath rage...

Since motorised scooter and wheelchair users are pedestrians, they are allowed to travel at up to 10 kilometres per hour. That's about six miles per hour in old terms – a brisk walking speed.

Many people are not used to seeing scooters and electric wheelchairs on the footpath. Because they move so quietly and quickly they can catch other pedestrian unawares, particularly those who may have vision and hearing impairments.

For safety:

- Whenever possible travel on the left side of the footpath;
- Travel at a speed which will enable you to stop quickly if you need to;
- Warn pedestrian when you are turning by using your indicators or giving a hand signal. If you cannot do this, stop and check before you change direction;
- You could also use a horn or have a beeper fitted;
- Do not suddenly change direction – check first what is going on around and behind you;
- Be careful if using audio headphones – they may make good company but they restrict hearing which may cause an accident.



Crossing roads when most at risk!

Motorised scooter and wheelchair users are most at risk of an accident when crossing the road.

Remember you are travelling at a very low speed so follow the same steps as you would as walking pedestrian:

1. When approaching the road, reduce your speed. Once you start to cross, increase speed (often the highest speed is not always appropriate);
2. Choose a safe place to cross – one which gives you a clear view of approaching traffic. Never cross near curves or hills where you cannot see oncoming vehicles;
3. If possible, go straight across to the opposite kerb rather than further down the road;
4. Use a pedestrian crossing if there is one nearby;
5. If you must use a roundabout, cross as if you were walking and give way to vehicles.

Stop, Look, Listen, Think!

When crossing even a quiet road, always use the Stop, Look, Listen and Think approach:

- Stop as close to the edge of the kerb as you can;
- Look for traffic in ALL directions;
- Listen for traffic you not be able to see; and
- Think if you have enough time to cross safely. You will need to carefully judge the speed and distance of approaching vehicles. If you're not sure if you can cross safely....WAIT!!!

Don't assume cars will stop for you...



particularly at intersections or crossings that are not controlled by traffic lights.

Road rules... it pays to know the law!

- When crossing the road always use crossings where available;
- Always cross by the shortest and most direct route;
- Do not remain on a pedestrian crossing for longer than is necessary for crossing;
- Do not stop on a footpath or road so as to inconvenience, obstruct, hinder or prevent the free passage of any other pedestrians or vehicles;
- Do not unnecessarily block the path of other users;
- If a footpath is in a usable condition, do not travel on the road;
- If the footpath is damaged or in poor repair, report it to **Cairns Regional Council** on 07 4044 3044 or www.cairns.qld.gov.au - use the "I want to" section and Send a general complaint (see attached web page)
- If no footpath exists, you must travel as close as possible to either side of the road;
- Do not travel two abreast either on a footpath or roadway;
- When a car is turning right, left or doing a U-turn, the car must give way to pedestrians;
- At roundabouts pedestrians must give way to vehicles;
- Never move suddenly into the path of a vehicle as this may create a hazard;

You must regulate your speed to that of other pedestrians to a maximum of 10 kilometres per hour. It is both discourteous and dangerous to assume that others will just 'get out of your way.'



Do I need to register?

Yes! Queensland legislation requires that **ALL** motorised wheelchairs and scooters are registered. There is **NO** cost involved. A letter from your General Practitioner is necessary to obtain registration stating that the scooter or wheelchair is needed, “**due to severe mobility impairment (name of person)has a need to use the mobility device for assisted mobility**”.

Emergency Break Down Service

“Recharge” Emergency Station...

“RECHARGE: keeping people on the move” is an initiative of Cairns Regional Council and the Spinal Injuries Association to improve access for people with a disability in the Cairns region.

The program, "Recharge, keeping people on the move" is directed at all members of the community and visitors to our region who use powered wheelchairs and scooters. The program enables residents and visitors who use electric wheelchairs and scooters the ability to charge their batteries in an emergency at one of the **Cairns Libraries, Hambledon House Community Centre Edmonton, Mossman Library and the Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre.**

More “Recharge” centres will be opening, look for the sticker indicating they are a “Recharge” centre.

More people in our community are using scooters and electric wheelchairs to get out and about and continue to be an active part of the community despite their disability. While out and about, you may find yourself short of power for your scooter or wheelchair. Rather than have to cut short an outing if your scooter or wheelchair battery is low on charge, you can now visit one of the “Recharge” centres and then continue on with your activities.

Whilst charging your device, you have the opportunity to sit and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere of our “Recharge” centres.

Cairns Regional Council has ensured that the nominated sites have:

- Suitable access to the building
- space within the building that allows for the transport to be plugged in to the power
- informed staff to help customers to plug in
- available space for the customers to sit and enjoy the environment while the device is being charged.

Customers must bring their own charging equipment as every scooter and wheelchair has a different model of charger.

The Red Recharge sticker ensures that the Recharge points are easily identifiable.



Alternatively if a breakdown occurs:

RACQ:

The aim of the RACQ Wheelchair Emergency Breakdown Service is to get you and your scooter or wheelchair mobile as soon as possible following a breakdown.

If your scooter or wheelchair breaks down through a mechanical fault, RACQ has a service to help get your mobility device up and running.

If for some reason the RACQ cannot immediately get your device mobile, they will either arrange alternative transport for you and your device or will ensure that you and your device are moved to a safe location until help arrives.

The RACQ Wheelchair Emergency Breakdown Service is available throughout Queensland provided reasonable access is available for the RACQ vehicle and equipment required.

RACQ:

Enquiries about membership services, fees and insurance 13 19 05.

RACQ Roadside and Mobility Device Assistance 13 11 11
(24 Hours a day)

Local Mobility Scooter Retailers:

Your local mobility scooter retailers may offer a “Recovery” service. Look up their numbers in the Yellow Pages and place them in the back of this booklet or stow them in your mobile phone along with the RACQ and other emergency contact numbers.

Crossing Railway Lines

People who use a mobility device need to be aware of the risks of crossing railway tracks.

Only cross railway lines at marked crossings.

- **Look** for flashing lights and whether gates or barriers are closed... or are closing;
- **Listen** for warning bells ringing;
- **Think** even if there are no flashing lights or warning sounds, check both directions for trains. If a train has just passed, look and listen again before moving as another train may be approaching.



When you are absolutely sure the tracks are clear:

- Proceed slowly and in a straight line;
- Avoid uneven, broken surfaces as any jolting may cause you to lose control, report any damage to crossings via Cairns Regional Council web or contacts listed on page five.



- Never do a U-Turn as the wheels may become lodged between the rail lines and the bitumen. It is safer to continue to travel ahead even if the bells suddenly start ringing. Don't increase speed as you will have enough time to reach the other side or the emergency gate ahead;

· If your wheels do become entrapped, immediately seek assistance, **dial triple 0 in an emergency.**

· Similar rules apply for crossing tram tracks or sugar cane train lines, travel slowly in a straight line and avoid U-Turns.



Travelling on public transport

Thinking of travelling by public transport? It is always a good idea to plan ahead by at least 24 hours and contact the relevant operator to ensure they can cater to your requirements.

Because of the need to use boarding ramps, the operator may want to know details such as dimensions and weight of your mobility device, etc. It is also important to know if your local bus stop has been converted to a compliant bus stop that will accept low floor buses, if you are not sure, please call Cairns Regional Council on 4044 3044 and ask customer service.

Anchoring points are not available on most trains, trams and buses so it is important your mobility device has effective braking that you can use while the transport is in motion.

Trains

Rural and metropolitan trains can accommodate most types of mobility devices. The standard dimensions are 800mm x 1300mm, any mobility device larger than this may cause difficulties using public transport.

If travelling from a rural station, inform the conductor so they will be able to provide a portable ramp and assist you to board and alight. On the metropolitan rail network, you can get assistance from the driver by positioning yourself at specific markers on the platform, look for the International Symbol of Access as shown here.



If you need attendant care, you will need to bring a companion.

Always get to the station well before the train is due to arrive.

Taxis

Wheelchair accessible taxis are available. See the Yellow Pages for contact numbers and write them in the back of this guide. Please inform the Taxi Company that you are travelling in a mobility scooter to ensure they can accommodate you.

Self Assessment Checklist

Although you have been assessed for your ability to use a motorised mobility device by your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist, it is critical that you monitor your ability to ride safely in the community.

The following are essential skills for your continued safe use of your mobility device.

If you answer 'No' to ANY of the questions on the next few pages, you should contact your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist.

They may be able to advise you if adaptations or modifications can be made to your mobility device to compensate for any changes in your circumstances.

Sometimes the only safe way to use a motorised mobility device is if accompanied by another person.

Co-ordination and strength

- Can I easily operate the controls, e.g. turn key, adjust dials, use the accelerator?
- Can I steer and turn the scooter, even in tight corners?
- Can I turn my head to look to the side or behind if reversing?

Physical balance and endurance

- Can I maintain balance when travelling across uneven or rough terrain?
- Can I adjust my body position when travelling up/down inclines such as ramps and driveways?
- Can I handle different weather conditions if travelling outdoors or long distances?
- Can I be seated for extended periods?

Vision

- Can I notice and move around obstacles in all fields of vision?
- Can I notice moving objects and avoid collisions?
- Can I notice objects in the periphery of my vision? Such as pedestrians and motor vehicles before they are right on top of me?

Perception

- Can I judge distances correctly? For example, how close an object is?
- Can I judge the speed of my own mobility device and other vehicles and pedestrians?

Thought process and memory

- Can I remember safety procedures?
- Can I concentrate for lengthy periods?
- Can I react quickly if I need to stop or turn?

Feelings and judgement

- Can I stay calm in difficult situations?
- Can I be patient with other people?
- Can I make good judgements in protecting my own safety and the safety of others?

Medication

- Am I regularly taking medication that may interfere with using my mobility device safely?

Who can I ask to assess my safety and driving abilities?

As well as your Occupational Therapist, you can also approach your doctor or community health worker.

Remember, your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist is there to optimise your independence and safety in the community.

Checklist information courtesy of the Road Traffic Authority, NSW.

Department of Transport Qld requirements...

The motorised mobility device is to be used ONLY by the registered operator who:

- Has a doctor's certificate stating that "due to severe movement impairment (name)..... has a need to use the device for assisted travel".
- Is capable of safely operating the mobility device.
- Will abide by Queensland Road Rules.

The safe way to use motorised scooters and wheelchairs in the community.



Remember....

1. Monitor your driving skills with our self assessment checklist. If you have a concern, contact your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist.
2. Use a flag and wear bright clothes to make yourself more visible.
3. Try to use the safest and quietest route.
4. Travel at a speed which will allow you to stop quickly if you need to.
5. Cross roads by the most direct route and before crossing, Stop... Look... Listen... Think!
6. On the footpath, regulate your speed to that of other pedestrians.
7. Don't assume cars will stop for you

Acknowledgements:

Cairns Regional Council thanks the City of Greater Bendigo for waiver of copyright allowing the local production of this booklet for benefit of motorised wheelchair and scooter users.



Scooters NQ for their assistance with providing photographs for inclusion in the directory.



Emergency Contact Numbers:

RACQ Roadside and Wheelchair Assistance: 13 11 11
(24hr)

Emergency Services: 000

Emergency Contacts:

Home:

Family:

Other:

Cairns Regional Council Complaints: 07 4044 3044

Nearest Recharge Facility:

Handy Information:



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