



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Up to thirty percent of wheelchair and scooter users face prosecution.**

Austroroads, the government agency for advising on the road rules in Australia and New Zealand, have come up with a proposal that makes it illegal for up to thirty percent of electric wheelchair and mobility scooters users to be out on public footpaths.

Austroroads claims that portable scooters and wheelchairs are not fit to be used on any public place because they are not stable enough. Once their proposal gets the nod from each state government, anyone using one of these products will be liable for a fine and prosecution.

"It's one of the more stupid ideas that sometimes comes out of the bureaucracy that will immediately affect a huge number of scooter and wheelchair users in both Australia and New Zealand," said Peter Fraser, Managing Director of Scooters Australia, the oldest scooter retailer in Australia.

The Austroroads proposal would make it impossible for any Class A scooters or wheelchairs to be used in a public place on footpaths anywhere in Australia. Class A is a category that includes all portable and collapsible mobility scooters and electric wheelchairs.

The Austroroads proposal does not prohibit the sale of these products, but proposes to ban them for use in all public areas under the control of the state transport ministers.

"Portable scooters and powerchairs have become the most popular segment of the mobility market in Australia and around the world, simply because they have such broad applications," said Mr Fraser.

"People can take them on planes, on cruises, they fit easily into the boot of a car, and that's why they are so popular," he said.

"So what's the use of buying one if you can only use it in your own home? It's just crazy to say they're not stable enough when a third of mobility scooter users have been buying them for 20 years, including recently through the NDIS," he said.

One of the areas that will be particularly hard hit is the tourist industry, where many international and domestic travelers use portable scooters to get around when they visit new destinations. Austroroads have not addressed the issue of international travelers arriving with a portable scooter and how Border Force will deal with these visitors.

"In the real world these scooters are popular precisely because you can use them in international travel. So what are we going to say to those people that visit Australia with a portable scooter but can't use them anywhere except inside their hotel?" Mr Fraser asked.

"And that's not taking into account those less wealthy disabled people and NDIS clients who cannot afford a more expensive scooter but need something to improve their mobility," he said.

"It's just another example of not thinking through all the unintended consequences of making decisions on the hop," he said.

Austroroads will be presenting their proposal to the National Transport Commission, which is made up of the transport ministers of each state and territory, plus New Zealand. It will be up to these ministers to decide whether they will support this revision to the current road rules and ban these small scooters in public areas.

## **ENDS**

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