

National move on mobility scooters

A meeting of government agencies, health professionals, researchers and industry representatives has identified a range of measures to reduce the incidence of injury and death associated with mobility scooters.

Convened by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Reference Group acknowledged the benefits and level of independence offered by motorised mobility scooters to vulnerable members of the community such as the elderly and disabled.

However, participants also noted the significant numbers and causes of avoidable deaths and injuries that occurred while these scooters were being used.

Research conservatively indicates that an average of six mobility scooter-related deaths occur in Australia each year.

Many more people are injured—a one-year snapshot of hospitalisations involving ‘pedestrian conveyances’ indicated that more than 500 people received hospital treatment.

The factors involved in mobility scooter accidents included lack of safe alternatives to roads, uneven and poorly maintained footpaths, lack of suitable protective equipment for the user, influence of drugs or alcohol, lack of appropriate user assessment and training, and the physical limitations of users.

... participants also noted the significant numbers and causes of avoidable deaths and injuries that occurred while these scooters were being used.

In the shorter term government agencies have agreed to work cooperatively to review available educational material and to develop an education strategy that targets scooter users, suppliers, local governments and the broader community.

The meeting also agreed to a range of measures to improve data collection and road user rules and requirements. Work will also begin on a review of related importation requirements.

The ACCC and other interested parties will collaborate on a paper clarifying major issues with the use of mobility scooters and how to resolve them. Work will also begin on exploring matters that might be dealt with by either a voluntary or a mandatory standard.

