

moving rightalong

OBLIGATIONS AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
OLDER DRIVERS



Information Sheet 8

Motorised mobility scooters



Government of South Australia

Department of Planning,
Transport and Infrastructure

Moving Right Along: Obligations and Opportunities for Older Drivers encourages safer, greener and more active travel for older South Australians.

It comprises a series of Information Sheets about fitness to drive and legal responsibilities, driver assessments, ideas for maintaining the ability to drive safely and planning for the time when you, a family member or friend will decide to drive less or stop driving altogether.

Motorised mobility scooters

Motorised mobility scooters improve mobility and independence for people who have difficulty when moving due to disability, illness or injury. They are also known as mobility scooters, motorised wheelchairs or 'gophers'.

Motorised mobility scooters and your health

Check with a health practitioner about your suitability to use a mobility scooter. You do not have to obtain a Driver Medical Assessment, but if you have a condition that prevents you from driving safely, it may also affect your ability to successfully use a mobility scooter. Some medications can also affect the ability to operate a mobility scooter safely.

There are a number of essential skills required for the safe use of a mobility scooter. Consider your:

- hearing
- coordination and strength
- physical balance and endurance
- muscle or joint stiffness
- vision
- perception
- concentration
- reaction time.

Choosing a motorised mobility scooter

It is important that you find out as much as you can before choosing a mobility scooter for your own use. It is helpful to consider some of the following questions:

- *Is a motorised mobility scooter the right choice for me?* For example: Will a motorised mobility scooter be able to safely perform the tasks I need? Will it operate effectively in my local environment and terrain, considering the routes I plan to travel? Would other forms of transport better meet my needs?
- *Am I the right person for a motorised mobility scooter?* For example: Do I have a physical condition with a reasonable need

to use the scooter (a requirement of the South Australia Motor Vehicles Act 1959), Do I have the cognitive and physical abilities to safely operate a motorised mobility scooter? Could my medications affect my ability to operate a motorised mobility scooter safely?

- *What type of motorised mobility scooter is best suited to my needs?* For example: What design, size, power, features and accessories suit my needs? Does my preferred motorised mobility scooter comply with the Australian Road Rules? Is my preferred motorised mobility scooter a good match for the environment in which I need to travel? Does it need to disassemble for transporting in a car or airplane? Do I need to use it on public transport and if so, does it meet the size regulations (i.e. length, width, height and weight)?
- *Am I considering purchasing a second-hand motorised mobility scooter?* For example: Does the motorised mobility scooter meet the same safety criteria for a new scooter? What is the condition of the motorised mobility scooter? Has it sustained any damage? What is its service and maintenance history? Is the original owner's manual and other product information available?

Insurance

- The Motor Accident Commission provides third party bodily injury insurance for claims involving incidents that occurred on the road or footpath in which the rider of the mobility scooter was at fault.
- In the event of a crash in which the driver of another motor vehicle was at fault, that driver's third party insurance covers claims.
- Contact an insurance company or broker to check personal liability and insurance cover for the mobility scooter. Most household insurance policies cover legal liability for injury to other persons or damage to their property occurring on private property, but it is unusual for the insurance to include accidental damage to your mobility scooter. It is worth

checking your policy to ensure that this is covered.

Being safe

- Know, understand and practice using all of the scooter controls and functions.
- Have the scooter regularly serviced and undertake safety checks on a regular basis.
- Plan safe routes that provide footpaths and safe crossing points when travelling to places you usually visit.
- Be visible – wear brightly coloured clothing, attach a flag to your scooter.
- Consider fitting headlights for extra visibility.
- Travel at speeds suited to the conditions such as slowing down to take corners and when travelling in busy pedestrian areas.
- Always travel up and down ramps in a straight-on position, not at an angle, to avoid tipping.
- Disembark only on level surfaces..

Accidental acceleration of the scooter can occur under some circumstances. To avoid this, consider taking the following precautions:

- store packages and bags safely
- avoid hanging objects off the handles
- secure loose clothing
- remove the key from the key switch before getting on and off the scooter.



Australian Road Rules

The *Australian Road Rules* state that a person using a mobility scooter is classed as a pedestrian if the **maximum speed** on level ground **cannot exceed 10 km/h**.

As such the rider:

- must observe the same road rules that apply to pedestrians
- must not obstruct the path of any driver or other road user
- must not travel along a road if there is a footpath or nature strip adjacent to the road, unless it is impracticable to travel on the footpath or nature strip
- if travelling along a road must:
 - keep as far to the side of the road as possible
 - travel facing the approaching traffic unless it is not practicable to do so
- can use shared paths, off-road bike paths and shopping malls
- does not need to have a driver's licence.

These mobility scooters must have an **unladen weight of less than 110kg**.

They do not need to be registered and the rider does not need to wear a helmet or a seatbelt when travelling on a mobility scooter.

Most, but not all, mobility scooters available in Australia comply with these requirements, stated in the *Australian Road Rules*. It is important to check carefully before you buy e.g. if you need to travel up a slope to your home you may require a scooter that has a more powerful motor. This would mean that the scooter has to comply with different rules. If in doubt – check it out!

Your legal responsibility

As a licensed driver in South Australia and regardless of your age, you are **legally required** to report any medical condition or medication that may affect your ability to drive a motor vehicle safely. Please contact a Service SA customer service centre www.sa.gov.au/contact-us or call 13 10 84 for information regarding reporting a medical condition.

Also, health professionals are **legally required** to notify the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure as soon as they consider that you suffer from a physical or mental illness, disability or deficiency, or take medication that would be likely to endanger the public if you drive a motor vehicle.

The health professional does not need your permission as this notification is **compulsory by law**.

The consequences for failing to notify a reportable medical condition and continuing to drive are severe.

If involved in a crash:

- you may be charged with related driving offences and with failing to notify a reportable medical condition
- you may be sued for any damages to people or property caused by the driver in that crash
- your private car insurance coverage may be affected.

A motorised mobility scooter should suit your specific needs and abilities, and the specifications of the vehicle you choose should comply with the *Australian Road Rules*, the *Road Traffic Act (1961)* and/or the *Motor Vehicles Act (1959)*.

For advice and information, contact:

- The Independent Living Centre. This is a Government agency that can help with information about mobility scooters and motorised wheelchairs. Staff are specialised in providing information about individual needs and understand the importance of making sure that the scooter you buy will comply with the law.

The Independent Living Centre

11 Blacks Road, GILLES PLAINS SA 5086

Phone (08) 8266 5260

Email ilcsa@dcsi.sa.gov.au

- Shops selling mobility scooters also provide information.
- Other users of mobility scooters may be interested in answering your questions about features of their scooters e.g. stability, ease of use, access to controls and ease of battery recharge.

Moving Right Along Information Sheets

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For resources and contact details of relevant government departments and other organisations refer to Information Sheet 11.

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Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure

GPO Box 1533, ADELAIDE SA 5001
Telephone 13 10 84

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