Submission to the Department of Transport and Planning on the Public Transport Regulations 2025

August 2025

Introduction

RACV welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Transport and Planning's proposed updates to the *Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Conduct on Public Transport) Regulations 2025*.

RACV supports a temporary restriction of e-mobility devices on trains and coaches as a proportionate response to the risk of fire caused by lithium-ion batteries in e-scooters and e-bikes. However, this should be a short-term solution time-limited to no more than two-years while the Victorian Government collaborates with the Commonwealth and other States and Territories to better regulate the importation and sale of lithium-ion batteries and e-mobility devices to improve the safety quality of those devices.

RACV also calls on the Commonwealth Government to better regulate the importation of e-scooters to ensure maximum power and speed restrictions are complied with at point of sale.

About RACV

RACV is proud to provide exceptional experiences for our members and customers through a range of products and services. These include Emergency Roadside Assistance, Bike Assist, Motor Insurance, Home Insurance, Home Trades and an increasing range of options in the cleaner energy space, such as RACV Solar. In addition, RACV has ten Club and Resort properties across Australia and a range of domestic and international holiday packages, tours and cruises from our trusted travel partners.

Representing over 2.3 million members and an additional 500,000 customers, RACV exists to improve lives in the areas of home, cleaner energy, motoring, mobility and leisure.

Helping Victorians is at the heart of RACV. Last year, RACV:

- provided 1.16 million members with motor insurance policies
- covered 1.6 million members for Emergency Roadside Assist
- responded to 813,000 Emergency Roadside Assist call outs
- provided 898,000 members with home insurance policies
- assisted with 52,000 home emergencies through Emergency Home Assist.

This means RACV is in a Victorian home every six minutes.

RACV is committed to helping Australians transition to a cleaner energy future. Through several investments RACV now can help all Australians make this transition and save on energy costs. We offer cleaner energy products and services including solar panels and batteries through RACV Solar. RACV Solar is now one of the largest installers of solar power, both commercial and residential, on the east coast of Australia and is one of the largest installers of home batteries in Victoria.

RACV is an electric vehicle charger network operator with locations at RACV Clubs and resorts and public locations across Victoria. In 2025, a comprehensive upgrade was completed to enhance speed and reliability. Each RACV charging site also features CCTV security cameras to provide a safer environment for members and customers while charging their EV and help prevent vandalism.

RACV has also invested in electric vehicle charging companies JET Charge and Chargefox. Our team of electricians, engineers and project managers design, install and support commercial and residential EV charging infrastructure and provide integrated energy solutions for homeowners, fleet operators and businesses.

RACV delivers expert and tailored commercial energy solutions to help businesses save on energy costs, improve energy resiliency and reliability, reach renewable energy goals, unlock additional revenue streams and maximise return on assets through the energy markets.

Key services include commercial solar, battery storage, EV chargers, renewable energy roadmaps and system operation and maintenance.

Recommendations

Temporarily restrict e-mobility devices on public transport	1. RACV supports a temporary restriction of e-bikes and e-scooters on metropolitan trains and V/Line train and coach services based on the risk high-capacity lithium-ion batteries pose to public safety, time-limited to no more than two years until batteries and devices are better regulated. 2. RACV supports allowing the carriage of foldable e-bikes and e-scooters on trams and buses. As trams and buses can stop quickly in the event of a battery incident and allow rapid evacuation, RACV supports this as the least restrictive option. 3. To support passengers who will rely on e-bikes and e-scooters at the start and end of their travel, RACV recommends that the Victorian Government explore options on how these devices can be safely and securely stored at train stations.
Better regulate lithium-ion batteries	4. The Victorian Government should work with the Commonwealth and other States and Territories to develop and enforce minimum technical standards for the importation and use of lithium-ion batteries and consumer products that use and charge lithium-ion batteries. This should include placing import and sales restrictions on batteries and devices that do not meet minimum technical standards. 5. The Victorian Government should work with the Commonwealth and other States and Territories to strengthen labelling requirements on e-mobility devices to inform consumers about the risks of lithium-ion batteries and safe charging practices. In the event that the proposed public transport regulations are progressed, labelling should include a warning not to carry the device on trains and coaches. 6. The Victorian Government should continue to fund education and awareness campaigns for consumers to improve energy literacy, including how to safely use and charge devices containing lithium-ion batteries and what to do should an incident occur.
Better regulate e-bikes and e-scooters	7. RACV calls on the Commonwealth Government to assess the benefits and disadvantages of re-introducing e-bike standards in national importation rules. In particular, to consider requiring all e-bikes imported into Australia to be required to meet EN15194 in the Road Vehicle Standards. EN15194 is a trusted and globally-recognised standard that covers electrical and mechanical safety as well as standardised compliance markings. 8. RACV calls on the Commonwealth Government to work with States and Territories to develop nationally harmonised standards for imported e-scooters, regulating and enforcing maximum power and speed restrictions, and battery safety. Where appropriate to do so, importation rules should leverage existing international standards and certification schemes. 9. While some e-bikes and e-scooters available on the market continue to be high-risk and non-compliant, Consumer Affairs Victoria should undertake a comprehensive education and awareness campaign so that purchasers understand the maximum speed and power rules in Victoria.

Response to the proposed regulations

Temporarily restrict e-mobility devices on public transport

RACV wants Victorians to arrive safely at their destination, no matter how they choose to travel.

RACV research[1] suggests that most Victorians are multi-modal and use a mix of transport modes to get around. While the vehicle remains the leading form of transport, 80 per cent of Victorians use public transport, 44 per cent use a bike and 38 per cent of Victorians use a mix of car, public transport and bike riding to get around. Four in five Victorians walk for all or some of their transport journeys.

While e-mobility devices provide Victorians with transport choice and sustainability benefits, and increasingly help connect to public transport at the start and end of their trip, RACV recognises that the safety of all transport users' needs to be prioritised.

The rising number of lithium-ion battery incidents in Australia and globally underscores the urgency of regulatory intervention to prevent or minimise the number of e-mobility fires. RACV notes that the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) states that the Victorian Government has committed to working with the Commonwealth to improve importation standards and advocate for tougher national standards.

E-mobility devices present a heightened safety risk when carried on trains due to the limited ability to evacuate passengers in the event of a fire or battery-related incident, particularly while the train is in motion or underground. These devices contain high-capacity lithium-ion batteries, which are more susceptible to damage from regular wear-and-tear and environmental exposure. This increases the likelihood of thermal runaway events, which can result in rapid fire escalation and pose serious risks to public safety.

RACV therefore supports the Victorian Government's preferred regulatory option to restrict the carriage of e-mobility devices on trains, recognising the significant safety risks posed by lithium-ion batteries in enclosed and underground transport environments.

Many passengers use e-bikes and e-scooters as art of their journey, but current storage facilities at many train stations prohibit the storage of e-mobility devices. Recognising the inconvenience that may be caused for those passengers that currently travel with a e-bike and e-scooter on the train network, RACV recommends that the Government explore how e-bikes and e-scooters can be stored in secure storage facilities – such as bike lockers and cages – at train stations.

Permitting foldable e-mobility devices on buses and trams balances safety with accessibility, as these modes of transport allow for quicker evacuation in the event of an incident. The proposed restrictions on trains are therefore the least restrictive option that still prioritises public safety.

Better regulate lithium-ion batteries

Most lithium-ion batteries and charging technology sold by retailers in Australia appear to comply with existing standards and the overall risk of a lithium-ion battery fire is relatively low. However, we are seeing an increase in fires caused by lithium-ion batteries, particularly for e-mobility devices such as e-scooters and e-bikes.

Unsafe charging practices such as using incompatible chargers or overcharging batteries are risk factors for lithium-ion batteries. Additionally, improperly disposed of batteries can pose risks to people, the environment and property.[2]

Other risk factors include:

- exposing the lithium-ion battery to extreme heat sources, water or humidity
- dropping, crushing, denting, puncturing, cracking, or otherwise physically damaging the lithium-ion battery
- leaving the lithium-ion battery in fresh or salt water for a long time, causing corrosion within the battery
- lithium-ion battery system faults, cell malfunctions, short-circuiting or manufacturing defects.

[1] RACV Policy Sentiment Research 2024, n=1,000
[2] Lithium-ion batteries and consumer product safety, 2023, ACCC

Many cheaper rechargeable devices have entered the Australian market in recent years, especially through internet purchases. The CFA has previously noted that using chargers with the incorrect power delivery (voltage and current) can damage lithium-ion batteries. A non-compliant charger may not analyse the lithium-ion battery properly and could overcharge the battery rather than turning off when the battery is fully charged.

Given the increasing number of lithium-ion battery fires and the growth in e-mobility sales, there is a clear need for the Commonwealth Government to work with the States and Territories to restrict the ability for consumers to purchase devices that do not meet minimum technical standards.

RACV research indicates that one in five people are not aware of the risks of lithium-ion batteries.[3] In parallel with better regulation of the importation of consumer products that contain lithium-ion batteries, there is a need to increase consumer awareness about their risks and proper use. This should include clear and consistent labelling as well as general community awareness raising that provides consumers with practical safety guidance about both the quality of the battery and safe handling,

Better regulate e-bikes and e-scooters

e-bikes

Since 2021, e-bikes have not been regulated by what was then the *Motor Vehicle Standards Act*. In the subsequent years, we have seen a significant increase in both the number of unsafe e-bikes sold to Australian consumers via the internet, and an increase in collisions and battery fires involving e-bikes that are unlikely to be meeting globally-acceptable standards.

It is therefore timely for the Commonwealth Government to assess the benefits and disadvantages of re-introducing e-bike standards in national importation rules. In particular, to consider requiring all e-bikes imported into Australia to be required to meet EN15194 in the Road Vehicle Standards. EN15194 is a trusted and globally-recognised standard that covers electrical and mechanical safety as well as standardised compliance markings.

In the longer-term, regulating the importation of e-bikes to improve safety outcomes is a better regulatory approach than limiting the carriage of e-bikes on public transport.

e-scooters

In addition to the better regulation of e-scooters from the perspective of lithium-ion battery safety, RACV calls on the Commonwealth Government to take this opportunity to improve national standards for imported e-scooters to regulate and enforce maximum power and speed restrictions.

Due to the lower power capability of a legally defined e-scooter, e-scooters are not classed as road vehicles. Consequently, the importation of e-scooters is light-touch relative to the risk of e-scooters being sold in the Australian market at power and speed settings that are illegal and dangerous.

RACV notes the Victorian Government submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) issues paper on lithium-ion batteries that highlighted that product-specific safety standards for e-scooters and other e-mobility devices lag behind new technologies, and standards are not adopted consistently across States and Territories. While RACV does not suggest that e-scooters with a maximum continuous power of 200 watts should be classed as a road vehicle, there is a clear gap in the regulatory framework given that e-scooters are not just another consumer product but a form of transport operating on our roads and interacting with other vehicles and pedestrians.

RACV therefore calls on the Commonwealth Government to work with States and Territories to develop nationally harmonised standards for imported e-scooters, noting that harmonised maximum continuous power and speed standards will be critical to a successful national scheme.

As with e-bikes, regulating the importation of e-scooters to improve safety outcomes is a better regulatory approach than limiting the carriage of e-scooters on public transport.

[3] RACV Policy Sentiment Research 2024, n=1,000

While some e-bikes and e-scooters available on the market continue to be high-risk and non-compliant, Consumer Affairs Victoria should undertake a comprehensive education and awareness campaign so that purchasers understand the maximum speed and power rules in Victoria.

Conclusion

RACV supports the Victorian Government's proposed *Transport Regulations 2025* as a necessary and proportionate response to the growing safety risks posed by lithium-ion batteries in e-mobility devices. The restriction of e-bikes and e-scooters on trains and coaches is a practical short-term measure to protect public safety, particularly in enclosed and underground environments where evacuation is difficult. RACV also endorses the continued carriage of foldable e-mobility devices on trams and buses, recognising the balance between accessibility and safety.

However, long-term solutions require coordinated national action. RACV urges the Victorian Government to work closely with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions to establish and enforce minimum technical standards for lithium-ion batteries, improve labelling requirements, and fund public education campaigns to raise energy literacy and safe charging practices. Furthermore, RACV calls for improved import controls of e-bikes and e-scooters through agreed national standards to ensure consistent regulation of power, speed, and battery safety across e-mobility devices operating on our roads.