

Motorised Mobility Devices

A resource for municipal councils

April 2021





Acknowledgements:

This resource has been developed by Road Safety Victoria in collaboration with the Municipal Association of Victoria and Project Health Principal Consultant Fiona Landgren.

The primary goal of this resource is to support motorised mobility device user road safety. More motorised mobility device resources are available from the VicRoads website: vicroads.vic.gov.au

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This document should be referenced as follows:

Road Safety Victoria (2020). *Motorised Mobility Devices: a resource for municipal councils*, Melbourne, Victoria: Department of Transport.

The information in this resource is current as of April 2021. The advice contained is of a general nature. Individuals who are considering using a MMD are encouraged to discuss their suitability and options with their general practitioner and treating health professionals.

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1. Introduction

Motorised mobility devices (MMDs) including scooters and powered wheelchairs, are increasingly popular in Australia, providing a means of gaining independence and engagement with the community for younger and older people with mobility restrictions.

However, these devices are not without risk: each year, close to 1,000 Australians are admitted to hospital due to incidents involving a mobility scooter. Almost all of these injuries occur to device users, but there is also evidence of impacts on wider community safety. Hence road safety considerations are important contributions and councils can play a role in promoting and encouraging safe use of MMD's in their communities.

Road Safety Victoria (Department of Transport) has engaged with the Municipal Association of Victoria and other community, health, disability and industry stakeholders to deliver action on safety for users of motorised mobility devices (MMDs). This resource connects Victorian councils with the work being done to inform and support community members who may be using these devices, considering using these devices or considering a device for a family member.

It provides:

- information about new resources for current and prospective device users
- information about the activities of other stakeholders engaged in this area
- template articles for use in community newsletters
- other implementation opportunities to consider for your community
- sources of further information and support for MMD users and those working in the disability or ageing sectors

Each year close to 1,000 Australians are admitted to hospital as a result of incidents involving a mobility scooter.¹



¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, McKenna K, Tovel A and Pointer S (2019). Mobility scooter-related injuries and deaths. Injury research and statistics series no. 121. Canberra, AIHW Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/61abe614-d7b8-41c3-ba9a-0215f77a7c89/aihw-injcat-201.pdf>

2. Roles in supporting community safety

2.1 The role of municipal councils

There is agreement from stakeholders on the need for interventions to better support and encourage user safety with local government and community organisations providing an important touch point for device users, their families and carers, health professionals and other members of the community.

Information and other interventions sit logically within existing programs that support people with disabilities and older community members. A client-centred approach which includes family, carers and relevant others is critical to optimise safety and personal mobility independence outcomes.

2.2 The role of health professionals

Multidisciplinary teams, including health professionals such as general practitioners and occupational therapists, support MMD users to achieve and maintain safe independent mobility and quality of life.

For road safety and optimal outcomes for device users, it is vital that the community understands the importance of involving health professionals when selecting mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs. These are therapeutic devices, and legally, they can only be used by people who are unable to walk or have difficulty walking (or are being trained in their use). The involvement of health professionals ensures mobility needs are properly assessed and that a suitable device is selected. Health professionals such as occupational therapists (OTs) are also best placed to provide assessment for use suitability, education and training on the safe use of these devices and to monitor a person's continued capacity to operate the device safely.

More information about the role of occupational therapists, general practitioners and other health professional are provided in VicRoads fact sheets:

- [Fact sheet for GP practices -Motorised mobility devices](#)
- [Consumer fact sheet - Occupational therapist assessment for use of a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair](#)

2.3 The role of equipment suppliers

Assistive technology suppliers are a valuable source of expertise. Their role may include:

- Advising consumers, families, carers, and health professionals about the device options available including suitable accessories (safety flags, bags, trays, covers etc.)
- Advising about customisation to suit individual needs in conjunction with occupational therapists
- Providing access to devices for trial and training



- Providing device servicing, maintenance, and ongoing advice
- Hiring of devices

Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia (ATSA) is the industry body representing suppliers. It supports its members to deliver high quality services. Equipment suppliers registered with ATSA can be found on their website (www.atsa.org.au). ATSA conducts annual Expos to inform consumers and professionals about assistive technology.

2.4 The role of families and carers

Family members and carers are also important to support safe independent use of MMDs. Their role includes:

- Understanding and encouraging the MMD user's involvement in the assessment and training process
- Facilitating and supporting safe use and transportation of the device
- Monitoring MMD use and supporting communication of any concerns to health professionals so that appropriate re-assessment or training can occur if necessary
- Supporting safe storage, charging and maintenance of devices.



2.5 The role of Victoria Police

Community safety is a priority for Victoria Police, and they work with municipal councils and other community organisations to support safe use of motorised mobility devices in the community.

Concerns regarding particular incidents and behaviours may be directed to Local Area Commanders who will collaborate in providing inputs such as proactive patrols and user advice.

3. New resources support informed decision-making and safe use of MMDs

3.1 VicRoads webpage and consumer resources

VicRoads has collaborated with Austin Health and a range of other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive suite of resources designed for current and potential users of MMDs, as well as family members, carers and health professionals.

The information helps users and others to:

- Decide whether a motorised mobility device is the right choice for supporting mobility for that individual
- Choose a suitable device that best suits a person's needs and environment(s) of use
- Use the device effectively and safely
- Access and use public transport safely
- Know where to go to get more information

The website address is <https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/safety-and-road-rules/pedestrian-safety/motorised-mobility-devices>

The screenshot shows the VicRoads website interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Contact us, About VicRoads, Languages, News & Media, Careers, Publications & Forms, and Contrast. A search bar and login button are on the right. The left sidebar lists various services: I want to..., Licences, Registration, Safety & Road Rules, Traffic & Road Use, Planning & Projects, Business & Industry, and Coronavirus. The main content area is titled 'Motorised mobility devices' and includes a breadcrumb trail: Safety & Road Rules > Pedestrian safety > Motorised mobility devices. The page content states that the Victorian Government is committed to helping people who have difficulty walking to remain active members of the community. It includes statistics about hospital admissions and a note about injury research. A list of quick links on the right side provides access to various guides and fact sheets, including 'A guide for choosing and using mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs - Comprehensive guide [PDF 1.8 Mb]' and 'Fact Sheet 1 - Is a motorised mobility device right for you? [PDF 281 Kb]'.



A guide to choosing and using mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs

This comprehensive guide has been extensively revised with input from consumers, health professionals, government, and industry stakeholders. It now provides definitive guidance for each step in the pathway, from deciding whether an MMD is a suitable choice through to safe use of the device in the community. The resource includes content regarding:

Rules

- Who can use these devices and where they can be used.

User/Operator requirements:

- Deciding if these devices are the right choice as a mobility aid, including confirming physical and mental requirements to safely operate them. A useful CHECKLIST guides potential users and their families/carers through these considerations.



Choosing and using the device:

- Choosing the right device to meet individual needs, including a CHECKLIST to step through important considerations and to help communicate needs to health professionals and suppliers.
- Operating the device safely to protect user and community safety.
- Using the device on public transport, including another CHECKLIST.

Tips for using the VicRoads consumer resources

The content of the main Guide and fact sheets provides a useful basis for communication to your community.

They can be used as a basis of articles or webpage content as well as at community events and education. Limited quantities of hard copies of the main guide are available via the [VicRoads online bookshop](#) or by calling 1300 509 371

For more ideas see Section 3.

Fact sheets

Based on the full Guide, a series of fact sheets has been developed to provide information about the various steps in choosing and using a motorised mobility device.

Fact Sheet 1 – Is a motorised mobility device right for you?

Not everyone is suited to using a MMD. This fact sheet helps users/family/carers decide whether a MMD is a suitable option. Importantly, if a person is not fit to drive a car, they cannot assume that they are able to use a mobility scooter safely.

A checklist guides the decision-making process, and users are encouraged to share this with their healthcare professionals.

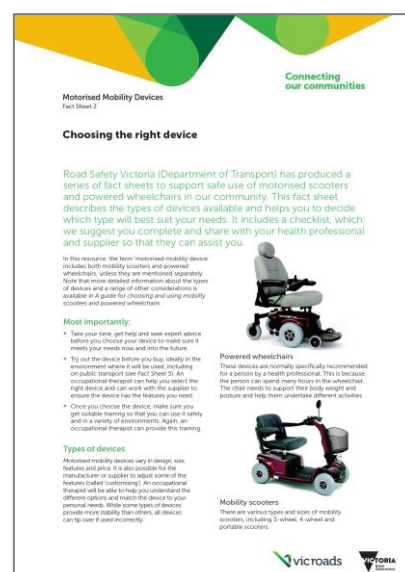


Fact Sheet 2 – Choosing the right device

This fact sheet describes the many things a person needs to consider when choosing a device to best suit their needs.

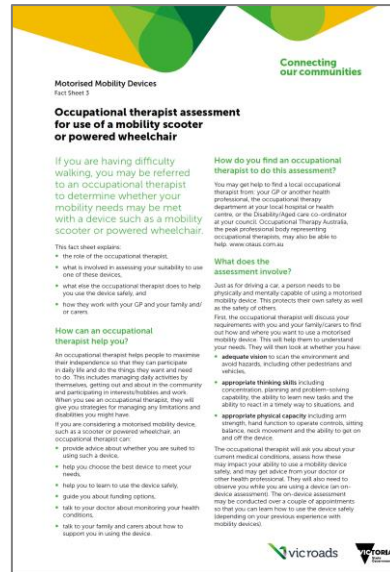
It includes a checklist that guides a person through these considerations and encourages them to share the findings with their health professional and supplier.

It emphasises that MMDs are therapeutic devices and the importance of getting expert advice.



Fact Sheet 3 – Occupational therapist assessment for use of a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair

This fact sheet helps to explain the role of the occupational therapist in determining a person's suitability for a motorised mobility device in the first instance, as well as guiding selection of an appropriate device, providing training in safe operation and assisting with funding options.



Fact sheet 4 – Safe use of your motorised mobility device

Safety is the main goal of this project and this fact sheet outlines the key safety considerations, commencing with the importance of training in device use.

The fact sheet reinforces the main aspects of safe operations, including the road rules that apply when using these devices.

Another helpful checklist serves as a reminder of things to consider for each trip.



Fact Sheet 5 – Using your motorised mobility device on public transport in Victoria

The Victorian public transport system aims to be as accessible as possible for people with disabilities, including those who use a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair. This fact sheet summarises important things to consider if a person is planning to use their mobility device on public transport, including trains, trams, buses and taxis.



3.2 Community education resource

Road Safety Victoria (Department of Transport) has developed a community education presentation resource, which includes a PowerPoint slide set, presenter's notes and presenter's guide.

The presentation highlights MMD user, road safety and assessment issues and may be delivered in various settings, such as through municipal councils, healthcare services and aged care facilities.

Occupational therapists or other health professionals with appropriate knowledge in this area commonly deliver the presentation to community groups. Alternatively, if the presenter has limited technical knowledge and expertise, it is desirable for an occupational therapist to be present to respond to specific MMD assessment, acquisition, training or usage queries. Other potential partners include suppliers and Victoria Police.

The presentation refers to and utilises the Road Safety Victoria MMD resources, including fact sheets and checklists, as described in this document.

To access the resource, email communitygrants@roads.vic.gov.au with the subject line "Request for MMD presentation resource". The request should include the following information:

- Name, role and organisation of the requesting person/presenter
- Anticipated audience details (e.g., patients, staff, carers/family)
- Anticipated audience size
- Presentation date
- Presentation purpose and context (e.g., outpatient chronic illness education session, aged care training for carers/PCAs/internal staff, community/free council event during Seniors Month)

Feedback about the community education resource is welcome and can be provided to the Community Programs team.



Safe use of motorised mobility devices including mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs 2020



4. Reaching out to your community

There are a range of ways councils can promote the safe use of MMDs in their communities, including:

- Having information and resources available on their websites for download
- Promoting MMD resources and safe use at Seniors Festival and other community events and activities
- Having hard copy information brochures available in libraries and council offices
- Running information sessions for the community using the resources developed by and available through Road Safety Victoria and partnering with other stakeholders such as health professionals, funders, suppliers and Victoria Police (see [Section 3.2](#))
- Including information about resources in seniors' newsletters (see Appendix 1)
- Having resources available to home care and assessment staff where those services are provided by council
- Seeking feedback from MMD device users to inform public infrastructure/road safety planning
- Raising the issues of safe MMD use with council planners and infrastructure designers



APPENDIX 1 – Sample articles

The following articles are provided to support communication about the main messages for MMD user safety. They may be used as presented or edited to suit local requirements, including by incorporating personal interest stories of local device users and relevant services/events.

Images are provided courtesy of the Assistive Technology Society of Australia and the Department of Transport and may be used with acknowledgement.

ARTICLE 1

Getting around safely – scooter user essentials

Mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs are commonplace as people seek to maintain their independence and their engagement with the community.

With mobility comes the need to think about safety. Indeed, each year in Australia, almost 1,000 people are admitted to hospital due to injuries associated with mobility scooters ([AIHW, 2019](#)). Serious injuries commonly result from incidents involving motor vehicles on road crossings, as well as tipping on uneven surfaces or falling from the device.

Improved safety is the aim of a suite of new resources developed by the Department of Transport, and now accessible via our Council website ([link](#)). They make essential reading for current users as well as those considering a scooter, their families, and carers.

Importantly, not everyone is capable of using a motorised mobility device – safe operation requires a person to have good eyesight, as well as adequate physical and mental capacity. For this reason, a scooter may not be an option for someone who has retired from driving due to health reasons. Advice from a health professional is therefore a vital first step before purchasing a device. Capacities can also change over time, so ongoing health professional monitoring is also important.

The resource ***‘Choosing and using motorised scooters and powered wheelchairs’*** explains the role of health professionals such as GPs and occupational therapists in assessing suitability to operate a device safely – a checklist provides a guide to self-assessment and a useful conversation starter for families and carers.

The resource, and corresponding fact sheets also step through decisions about choosing the right device and safe operation, including crossing roads and operating the device around other pedestrians. Considerations for use on public transport are also well covered.

For more information see our website.

ARTICLE 2

Ten top safety tips for scooter users

Mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs provide an enormous benefit – keeping users connected and independent. But safety is paramount and is the focus of new resources produced by the Department of Transport and accessible via the XXXXXX Council website.

Among the many considerations for safety covered by the resources, we've selected ten top tips. See our website or the VicRoads website for more information.

- Learn how to use your device properly – make sure you receive in-depth skills training from an occupational therapist. This should be conducted in the places where you will be using the device and should include basic operation as well as more advanced skills such as crossing the road.
- When using your device among other pedestrians, do not exceed the walking speed of those around you. This applies to footpaths, shopping centres and transport stops such as rail platforms. The road rules require that these devices not travel more than 10km/hour.
- Be careful when changing direction – make sure you turn your head to check around you before turning. Don't just rely on your mirrors. Slow down to reduce the risk of tipping.
- You must travel on the footpath if there is one. If there is not a footpath travel close to the kerb and face the oncoming traffic.
- If possible, cross roads at pedestrian crossings or where there is good visibility of on-coming traffic. Cross using the shortest possible route and approach driveways and cross over ramps head-on rather than at an angle.
- Make sure you are visible – wear light coloured clothing and have a visibility flag on your device.
- Don't allow yourself to be distracted with your mobile phone or music while you are operating the device.
- Avoid parking the device on a slope.
- Make sure you turn the device off and remove the key before getting off. And do not start the device until you are comfortably seated.
- If you are carrying bags or shopping or another mobility device, be careful not to overload the device or create an imbalance. Make sure bags do not obscure the controls or affect other pedestrians.

www.vicroads.gov.au Search motorised mobility devices

APPENDIX 2 – Website content

The following content is provided as a guide for positioning and promoting the new Department of Transport resources.

Safe use of mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs

XXXXXX Council is committed to helping people who have difficulty walking to thrive in our community. For those who currently use or are thinking about a motorised mobility device (scooter or powered wheelchair), safety is an important consideration, and we are pleased to be able to direct you to resources that will help you or a family member to:

- decide whether a motorised mobility device is the right choice for you
- choose a suitable device
- understand how to use the device safely, including the relevant road rules
- safely access public transport if you need to
- know where to go for more information and services to support your mobility and safety

Did you know?

Each year in Australia, almost 1,000 people are admitted to hospital due to injuries associated with motorised mobility scooters.

[AIHW 2019](#)

Information resources

A suite of practical information resources developed by the Department of Transport covers all the essential information about choosing and using mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs in the community.

They include a **comprehensive guide** as well as fact sheets on specific topics.

Handy checklists support conversations and decision-making, and useful contacts put you in touch with health professionals, suppliers, funders, transport operators and insurers.

Remember, these are therapeutic devices, so seeking advice from a health professional is important before you make a purchasing decision. Talk to your GP about your mobility needs and ask about how an occupational therapist can help.



A guide for choosing and using mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs

November 2020



A specific fact sheet explains the role of occupational therapists in assessing suitability and individual needs, recommending devices, facilitating funding options, and providing education and training. See links below to the VicRoads website and resources.

QUICK links to consumer resources

- [VicRoads website – Motorised Mobility Devices](#)
- [A Guide for Choosing and Using Mobility Scooters and Powered Wheelchairs](#)
- [Fact Sheet #1 – Is a motorised mobility device right for you?](#)
- [Fact Sheet #2 – Choosing the right device](#)
- [Fact Sheet #3 – Occupational therapist assessment for use of a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair](#)
- [Fact Sheet #4 – Safe use of your motorised mobility device](#)
- [Fact Sheet #5 - Using your motorised mobility device on public transport](#)

Support through XXXXXXXX Council

[Add information about your information, services and activities that support MMD users, their families and carers. E.g mobility maps, charging stations, local public transport information]