

8.2. MM02: Impacts of E-Bike Share on local streets

The growing popularity of e-bikes presents unique challenges in regulation and safety for the State Government, NSW Police, and Local Governments. Council is actively advocating for improved management of these challenges.

Over recent months, electric bike share bikes (mostly Lime Bikes) have significantly multiplied across the streets of the North Sydney Local Government Area (LGA). Whilst many residents appreciate the utility and need for electric bike share, particularly with the challenging topography of North Sydney, there is increasing frustration with the way that share bikes are left, too often carelessly, to obstruct pedestrian and, at times, vehicular access. The responsiveness of bike-share operators does not appear to be fast enough nor consistent.

Unfortunately, bike share operations are not managed by North Sydney Council, nor any Council for that matter. They are regulated by NSW State Government legislation. Councils are unable to prevent bike share operators from expanding into any LGA.

The management and regulation of bike share systems fall under the Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2021 and the accompanying Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Regulation 2022. This legislation prevents NSW Local Governments, including North Sydney Council, from restricting bike-share operators from legally operating within an LGA. Instead, the Act and Regulation outline the requirements operators must follow, including the timeframes for relocating improperly parked bikes. If these requirements are not met, Councils are permitted to impound the bikes.

The process is time-consuming and relies on individuals making complaints in the first instance to the bike-share operator before alerting Council to exercise compliance action.

It is vital that bike-share operators effectively manage their operations and, wherever possible, provide dedicated parking areas.

Council is, therefore, working on multiple fronts to improve the regulation and operation of bike-share operators. Council is exploring the potential for regulation under the Local Government Act - although this approach has not yet been implemented by any other Council. Indeed, Council made a submission to the NSW Upper House Inquiry into the use of e-scooters, e-bikes, and related mobility options advocating for:

1. increased funding for active transport to enable local governments to deliver separated cycling facilities and road safety initiatives;
2. implementation of a docked bike-share system; and
3. additional resources for the Police to regulate the use of e-bikes and e-scooters, particularly on footpaths.

In addition, Council is currently investigating a trial to participate in a project with Transport for NSW to install dedicated parking bays within the North Sydney CBD and Crows Nest, close to the metro stations. The purpose of the trial is to reduce clutter caused by poorly parked shared e-bikes, and to prohibit parking outside of these designated parking bays. I'm advised that a report will shortly be coming to Council, which will provide further details on the

proposed trial. It is hoped that the trial will result in better regulation of bike share across the whole of NSW.

In the last term of Council, Council negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Lime Bikes with the purpose of managing the location and parking of share bikes and the responsiveness of Lime Bikes to ensure that local footpaths and roads are not obstructed with bikes. Unfortunately, the final MoU did not proceed – no doubt, in part, due to there being no requirement for collaboration between bike-share operators and Councils prior to expansion into a LGA. However, Lime Bikes recently approached Council seeking to revive the MoU to address operational issues and bike clutter on local streets.

I therefore recommend:

- 1. THAT** Council continue to lobby the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads to address regulation of bike and scooter share schemes to prioritise pedestrian safety and access and bike/scooter clutter.
- 2. THAT** Council seek to revive the Memorandum of Understanding with Lime Bikes to improve e-bike clutter on local streets.

**COUNCILLOR ZOË BAKER
MAYOR**