



SCOOTER SURVIVAL GUIDE



Your Safety is Important

- This booklet gives road safety advice to users of 'Motorised Wheelchairs' with three or more wheels, which are also commonly referred to as motorised scooters or gophers.

Motorised Wheelchairs (scooters) - are primarily designed for use by people with a 'Disability that substantially impairs their mobility'. They are not for use by able-bodied people.

Some Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) users have already been killed or seriously injured whilst travelling on-road. This makes it imperative that these mobility aids are not used on-road unless necessary.

By law, on a Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) you are a **PEDESTRIAN** and not classed as a vehicle.



Is it for me?

Q. Can I safely control my Motorised Wheelchair (scooter)?

A. Do you have problems or deficiencies in any of the following areas?

- Hearing
- Vision
- Muscle or joint stiffness
- Ability to plan your trip
- Concentration
- Reaction time
- Perception

If you do you should consult an Occupational Therapist or your GP before purchasing a Motorised Wheelchair (scooter).

- You must be able to control your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) safely. You must not cause a danger to or obstruction to any other person or vehicle on the roadway or footpath. If you cannot do this, you should not use your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter).
- Do not drink alcohol before using you Motorised Wheelchair (scooter).
- Check with your GP or pharmacist about the side effects of any prescription or over the counter medication, you may be taking.

Registration & Insurance

Q. What is a Motorised Wheelchair (scooter)?

- A. A Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) can have either three or four wheels. It is designed as a mobility aid that cannot travel more than 10km/h (on level ground) and which has a maximum unladen weight of 110 kilograms.

Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) is the term used to describe this type of mobility aid according to the Australian Road Rules. They are also commonly known as 'motorised scooters' or 'gophers'.

Q. Do I need any type of licence or registration to use my Motorised Wheelchair (scooter)?

- A. No - providing that your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) complies with the above definition and you have a 'disability that substantially impairs your mobility' you do not need a licence or registration.

Q. Do I need Third Party Insurance?

- A. A Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) as defined above is not required to have third party insurance.

It is, however, recommended that you arrange insurance cover to ensure that you, your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) and other parties are all covered in case of an accident or theft.

Where to Travel

Q. Where should I use my Motorised Wheelchair (scooter)?

- A.
- Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) users are classified as Pedestrians according to the Australian Road Rules. For your own safety you should remain on the footpath whenever possible.
 - A Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) is also permitted on the road where it is impractical to travel along the footpath or nature strip at the side of the road.
 - If using your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) on the road you must keep as far to the left (or right hand side) of the road/shoulder as possible. You must then return to the footpath as soon as possible.
 - Avoid mingling with other traffic and REMEMBER - you are the user of a Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) and NOT the driver of a small car!
 - Be aware that other traffic will not expect you to be on the road, which puts you at greater risk.
 - Travelling On-Road is Hazardous
- ONLY USE THE ROAD AS A LAST RESORT
 - Your relatively slow travelling speed compared to other traffic means that you should avoid mingling with other vehicles in marked travelling lanes, turn lanes and roundabouts. To travel on-road when there is an adequate off-road footpath is extremely hazardous and can have Fatal consequences!
 - Avoid Highways, high-speed roads and areas used by heavy vehicles unless you can travel off-road for the whole of your journey.

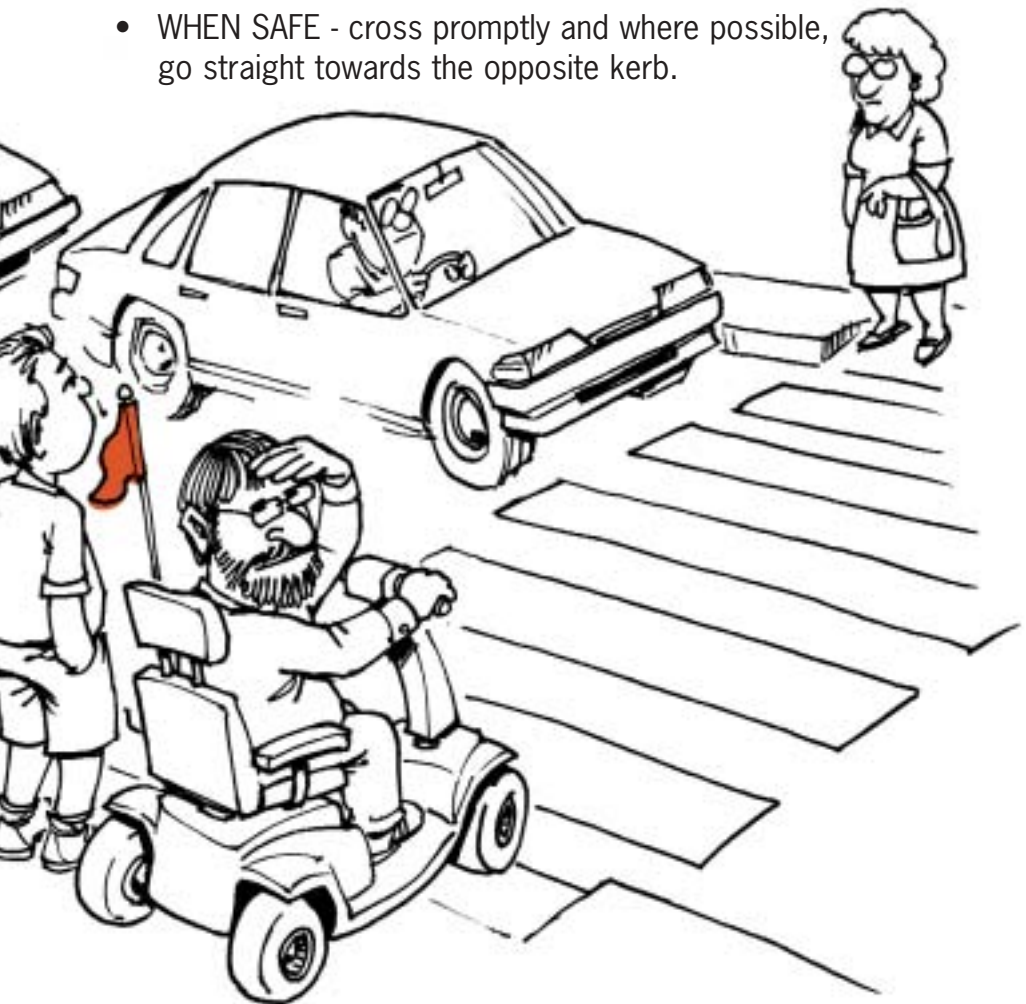
Q. How should I use the footpath?

- A.
- Keep to the left side of the footpath or shared cyclepath whenever possible.
 - Consider the safety of other pedestrians and children on bikes.
 - Travel at the same speed as other pedestrians.
 - Be careful when passing driveways and watch out for reversing vehicles.
 - Motorised Wheelchairs (scooters) move quickly and quietly. Warn others when you are approaching them from behind or changing direction, by means of a bell or a horn.



Q. How should I cross a road?

- A.
- Use a marked crossing or other pedestrian facility if available.
 - STOP first before you cross.
 - LOOK for traffic in all directions.
 - LISTEN - sometimes you can hear approaching traffic even if you cannot see it.
 - Make sure that you can see approaching traffic and that they have seen you.
 - If you are not sure that you can cross safely - WAIT.
 - WHEN SAFE - cross promptly and where possible, go straight towards the opposite kerb.



Plan a Safe Route

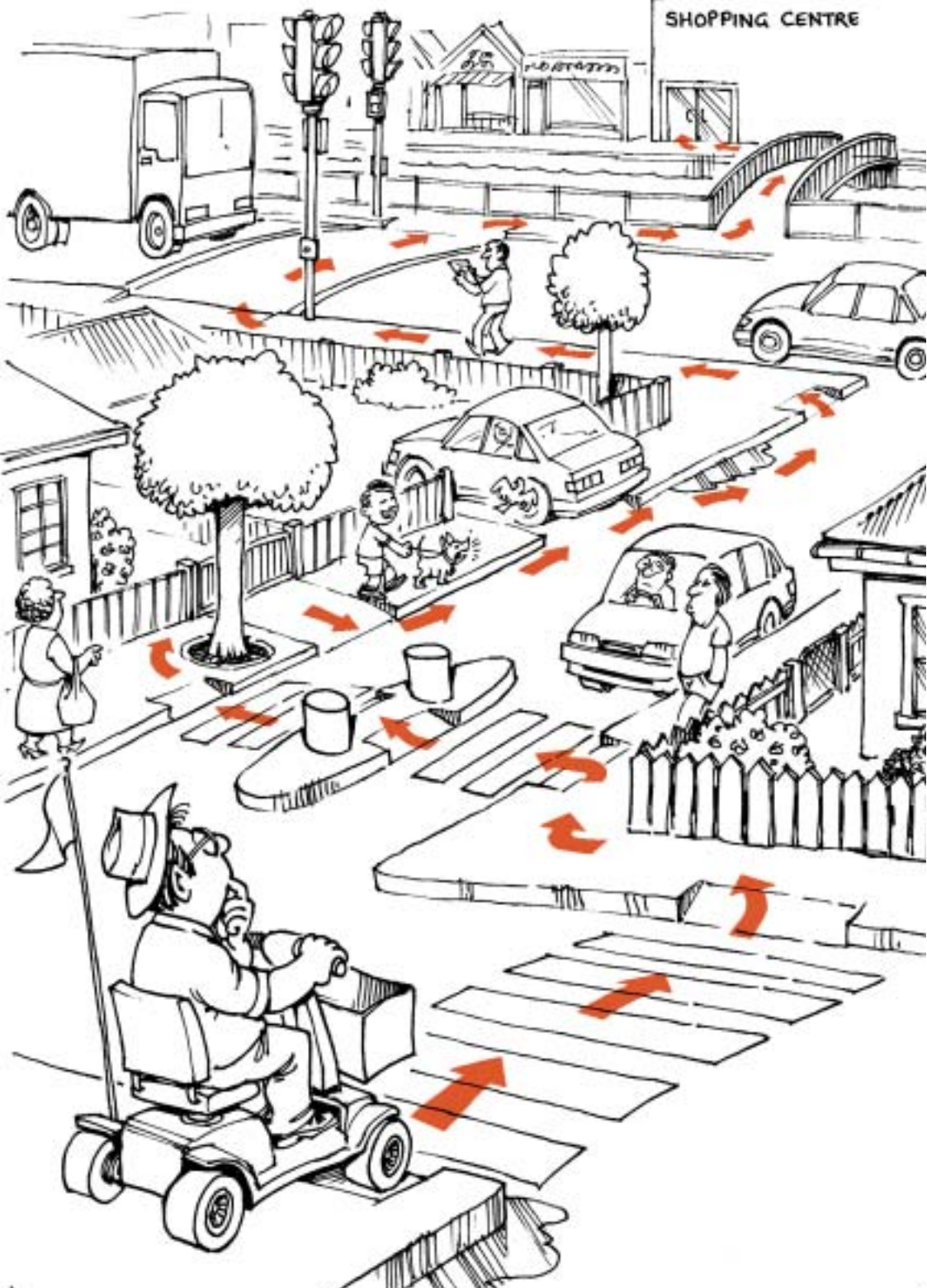
Q. How do I plan a safe route?

- A.
- Plan a route that allows you to remain on the footpath for the majority of your journey.
 - If there are no adequate pedestrian facilities and you have to go on-road, travel along quieter streets even if it means a longer journey.
 - Use pedestrian facilities to negotiate intersections or roundabouts.
 - Investigate a new route beforehand, if possible, to make sure it is accessible for your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter).
 - Determine the location of pedestrian crossings, traffic islands, kerb ramps at intersections and driveways that will assist you to cross the road and access the footpath.
 - Make sure that you select a route that allows you to BE SEEN by other road users.
 - Be aware of other hazards likely to cause problems for you such as railway lines, pot holes, drains, trees or foliage obstructions, difficult inclines and uneven surfaces.

Q. What situations should I avoid?

- A.
- Crossing the road where your clear view of the road is affected and approaching drivers may not see you, such as between parked or stationary vehicles, close to the crest of a hill or a bend in the road.
 - Situations where you are more at risk of injury such as by mingling with other traffic in travelling lanes, turn lanes or on roundabouts.
 - Going on-road at night. If you have to use your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) after dark or in poor light it is recommended that you stay on the footpath or other off-road facilities, even if you have lights and reflectors fitted.

SHOPPING CENTRE



Operating Tips

Do:

- Do go straight up or down ramps or kerbs, not at an angle.
- Do use caution and travel slowly in congested areas such as busy shopping areas, parking areas and shopping centres.
- Do STOP and LOOK for traffic before riding off the footpath or attempting to cross roads.
- Do organise parcels or shopping so that they do not interfere with the safe operation of your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter).
- Do wear a safety helmet.

Don't:

- Don't travel on the roadway for longer than is necessary.
- Don't make sharp turns at full speed.
- Don't ride on steep slopes that are beyond the capacity of your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter).
- Don't stop on a slope to rest or dismount. Use level ground for this purpose.



Be seen by others

Being seen by other road users is important for your safety. When riding a Motorised Wheelchair (scooter) you are lower than the height of a walking pedestrian. This makes you more difficult to see and puts you at greater risk of injury.

Drivers do not expect to see you so you have to stand out to be safe.

Lights on Motorised Wheelchairs (scooters) are not very visible to others and should not be relied upon to keep you safe, particularly at night or in poor light.

To improve your safety you should:

- Wear light coloured clothing.
- Use a high visibility vest or seat cover (especially if you have to travel on-road).
- Attach a fluorescent flag to your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter). This will help to highlight your position, to others.
- Use lights if you have them.



Maintenance and Care

- Carefully read the instruction manual from the manufacturer before use.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use and maintenance.
- Discuss and arrange a maintenance schedule with the supplier of your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter).
- Do not make modifications to your Motorised Wheelchair (scooter), as changes may create safety and/or legal problems

Useful Contacts

Independent Living Centre Ph:1800 800 523

Can help you chose the most appropriate mobility aid for your circumstances.

Occupational Therapists - Contact your GP or Area Health Service

Can help you with an assessment of your capabilities.

Council Road Safety Officer and Access Committee ph: your local Council

For safety advice and help in reporting hazardous locations.

For roadside assistance - NRMA Motoring & Services on 131 111

For insurance advice - NRMA Insurance on 132 132

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

National Roads and Motorists' Association Limited - Member Services

(For financial assistance in the production of this booklet)

Illustrator: Peter Lewis, www.lewisart.biz

A road safety initiative of
Lake Macquarie City Council, Newcastle City Council
Gosford City Council & Wyong Shire Council

Copyright Lake Macquarie City Council 2004