

Connecting  
our communities

# A guide for choosing and using mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs

November 2020



## **Disclaimer**

The nature of advice offered in this resource is general in nature. Readers are advised to consult with their health care professionals and motorised mobility device suppliers and/or manufacturers for advice about their particular needs and specific devices. Users of powered wheelchairs will most likely require a more comprehensive assessment and prescription process than that outlined in this resource.

This guide provides a general explanation of the legal requirements for pedestrians using motorised mobility devices. It does not purport to provide a complete set of the legal requirements that might apply to the use of a mobility device. For a complete knowledge of the road law, you should consult the *Road Safety Act 1986* and the *Road Safety Road Rules 2017*, or ask your lawyer to advise you.






# A safe and connected community

The Victorian Government is committed to helping people who have difficulty walking to remain active members of our community.

Each year, over 1,000 Australians are admitted to hospital due to incidents involving mobility scooters.<sup>1</sup> Almost all these injuries occur to device users, but there are also concerns about wider community safety due to the increasing use of these devices. Motorised mobility devices are classified as therapeutic devices. It is important for people to access professional advice and be supported to make choices about these devices that suit their needs. Assessment, training and regular review are also important to optimise safety.

This guide is for users, or potential users of motorised mobility devices, including mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs. It is also a helpful resource for family members and carers. It provides information and checklists to help you:

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<sup>1</sup> Reference: 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: [aihw.gov.au/getmedia/61abe614-d7b8-41c3-ba9a-0215f77a7c89/aihw-injcat-201.pdf](http://aihw.gov.au/getmedia/61abe614-d7b8-41c3-ba9a-0215f77a7c89/aihw-injcat-201.pdf)

# Is a mobility device right for you?

Not everyone is suited to using a motorised mobility device. This section will help you understand what is right for you. It includes a useful checklist that you can share with your health professionals, family or carer. In this resource, the term 'motorised mobility device' includes both mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs, unless they are mentioned separately.

## Are there rules around who may use a motorised mobility device?

You can only use a mobility device if you have a need to use it. That is, if you have difficulty walking, have a disability or are injured. Under the Road Rules and the *Road Safety Act 1986*, anyone who does not have such a disability is not permitted to use these devices on a public footpath or road.

## Mobility scooter or wheelchair?

Mobility scooters are good for people who can walk short distances. If you are not able to walk, then a powered wheelchair is likely to be a better choice for you.

Mobility scooters are generally designed for use outdoors and for travel on footpaths. They are generally longer than powered wheelchairs and require more space to turn around a corner or do a "U" turn so they may be harder to manoeuvre indoors. For more information about choosing the right device, see page 6.

## What else do you need to consider?

Just as for driving a car, you need to be physically and mentally capable of using a device safely.

**Satisfactory eyesight is important, so too is concentration, reaction time, clear thinking and the ability to learn new tasks. Sitting balance and posture, co-ordination, the ability to operate the hand controls and the consistent ability to get on/off the device are also important for safe use.**

Before you purchase a device, it is strongly recommended that you seek advice from your doctor or healthcare professional. They may refer you to an occupational therapist for assessment and for advice about which device best suits your needs (see page 3).

Users of motorised wheelchairs will most likely require a more detailed assessment than that outlined in this resource (e.g. considering transferring into/out of the device, specialised seating/cushions, customised controls).

If you are not suited to a motorised mobility device, your healthcare professionals can help you to explore other options for maintaining your independence in the community.

## How can an occupational therapist help you?

An occupational therapist helps people to maximise their independence so that they can participate in daily life and do the things they want and need to do. This includes managing daily activities by themselves, getting out and about in the community and participating in interests/hobbies and work.

When you see an occupational therapist, they will give you strategies for managing any limitations and disabilities you might have.

If you are considering a motorised mobility device, an occupational therapist can:

- Provide advice about whether you are suited to using such a device
- Help you choose the best device to meet your needs
- Help you to learn to use the device safely
- Guide you about funding options
- Talk to your doctor about monitoring your health conditions.

## Have you retired from driving?

If you are not fit to drive a car, it might not be safe for you to use a mobility scooter.

You should talk with your doctor about whether a scooter is right for you.

## Important safety rules

Under the Road Safety Act and Road Safety Road Rules in Victoria:

- Motorised mobility devices should be used only by a person with an injury, disability or medical condition which means the user is unable to walk or has difficulty walking. People who do not have difficulty walking are not permitted to use these devices on a public footpath or road.
- Motorised mobility devices are not defined as motor vehicles and therefore cannot be registered and must not be used on roads if a footpath or nature strip is available.
- The maximum speed must not exceed 10km/h on level ground if they are to be used on public infrastructure.
- They must have a maximum unladen mass of 110kg. This means the device on its own cannot weigh more than 110kg.
- Mobility devices are designed to carry only one person.
- People using these motorised devices or manual wheelchairs are considered pedestrians, and therefore must obey the same road rules as other pedestrians. See page 16 for more information.
- You do not need a licence to use a motorised mobility device, but you need to be capable of using it safely.

# Checklist 1. Is a motorised mobility device the right choice for you?

Your safety is important. The safety of other people is important too. If you answer YES to ALL the checklist questions, a mobility scooter is likely to be a suitable option for you. If you are unsure about answers or you have answered NO to some of the questions, you should talk to your doctor. They might refer you to an occupational therapist to help you make the right decision about whether a mobility device is the best choice. The occupational therapist will also help you choose between the many different types and styles of devices. They can also suggest ways to overcome any issues you have identified. Complete this checklist before you buy or hire a motorised mobility device.

Yes No

## 1 Eligibility to use a motorised mobility device

Do you have difficulty walking? (These devices can only legally be used by people who have difficulty walking)

## 2 Mobility scooter or powered wheelchair?

Can you stand and walk for short distances?

If not, a powered wheelchair may be a better option and you will require professional advice and assessment to select the most appropriate one. The following questions are most relevant to people looking to use a mobility scooter.

## 3 Medical advice

It is important to consider whether your health conditions or treatments might affect your safety when using a mobility scooter.

- a. Have you discussed the use of a mobility scooter with your doctor?
- b. Have you seen an occupational therapist about your daily functioning?

## 4 Eyesight

You must have good eyesight to use a mobility scooter safely.

- a. Have you had an eye examination in the last 12 months?
- b. Can you clearly see cars, pedestrians and other hazards (such as potholes, uneven footpath) in the distance and around you?
- c. Can you turn your head to look over your shoulder?
- d. Can you turn your head and body so that you can look behind when reversing?

Yes No Not sure

## 5 Physical ability

You need to have the physical ability to get on and off the device and the strength to use the controls including turning the key, adjusting speed dials, using the accelerator and reverse lever, steering the device, and turning corners.

Do you believe you have the physical capacity to operate a mobility scooter?

## 6 Balance

Being able to maintain sitting balance by adjusting your body position is important when travelling over rough and uneven ground or travelling on inclines and declines.

Do you think you can maintain your sitting balance on a moving mobility scooter and sit for extended periods?

## 7 Thinking skills

In order to use a mobility scooter, you need to learn and remember new skills and solve problems. You also need to be able to concentrate for extended periods of time, react quickly to unexpected situations and find your way around.

a. Can you judge the distances and speed of approaching vehicles correctly?

b. Can you remember how to get to places and move around your community without getting lost?

c. Can you learn and remember new tasks?

d. Can you concentrate for long periods without getting distracted?

e. Can you usually stay calm in difficult situations?

f. Are you usually patient with other people and traffic?

### Are you concerned about someone's capacity to use a motorised mobility device?

This checklist may help to start a conversation and encourage the person to follow up with a health professional for advice.

## Choosing the right device

Motorised scooters and powered wheelchairs are therapeutic devices. They come in different styles, sizes and incorporate different features. It is important to choose the right device that matches your requirements. This can be a complex process. Your medical condition/s, your body shape/size, physical abilities and thinking skills, where you want to use your device, space available for charging and storage as well as your lifestyle all need to be considered.

Take your time, get help and seek expert advice before you choose your device to make sure it meets your needs now and into the future.

### **Some questions that will help you identify your general requirements:**

- Do you have any hand limitations that might limit the type of controls you can use?
- Will your body shape or weight influence the type of device you need, including how you get on/off the device and the safe operation of controls?
- Where will you be using the device – indoors/outdoors?
- How far do you need to travel? What battery life might be required?
- Will you be able to make all trips along footpaths?
- Will you need to travel on rough or uneven surfaces?
- Will you need to travel up and down slopes/hills?
- Will the device need to be transported by car?
- Will you need to take the device on public transport or in a wheelchair accessible taxi?
- Will you need to take the device on a plane?
- What will you need to carry on the device?
- Do you have undercover storage and how and where will you charge the batteries?

**Our checklist on page 10 will help you think more specifically about device features and your needs.**

### **Most importantly:**

Try out the device before you buy, ideally in the environment where it will be used, including on public transport (see page 22). An occupational therapist can help you select the right device and can work with the supplier to ensure the device has the features you need.

Once you choose the device, make sure you get suitable training so that you can use it safely and in a variety of environments. Again, an occupational therapist can provide this training.



## Types of devices

Motorised mobility devices vary in design, size, features and price. It is also possible for the manufacturer or supplier to adjust some of the features (called 'customising'). An occupational therapist will be able to help you understand the different options and match the device to your personal needs. While some types of devices provide more stability than others, all devices can tip over if used incorrectly.

### Powered wheelchairs

These devices are normally specifically recommended for a person by a health professional. This is because the person can spend many hours in the wheelchair. The chair needs to support their body weight and posture and help them undertake different activities.

- They are usually operated using a joystick.
- They have a small turning circle, which makes them suitable for indoor use and use on most public transport.



- They can be customised to meet the user's individual needs. For example, it is possible to add extra posture support (e.g. back, neck and side chest supports) or change the joystick (e.g. make it larger to enable a more secure grip), change the position of foot plates, etc.
- They can be mid wheel, front wheel or rear wheel drive. This will influence the turning circle and the way the device handles obstacles and inclines.
- A speed dial controls the operating speed. Speed can also be controlled by altering the finger pressure on the joystick.

### Mobility scooters

There are various types and sizes of mobility scooters. Here is a list of common features:

- **Hand levers:** Scooters have hand operated levers to control speed and direction (forward/reverse). The levers are positioned on a central tiller and vary in length and design. You need to be able to reach them comfortably and maintain a secure hand position.
- **Central tiller:** The central tiller links the hand controls to the front wheel axle. On some scooters, the tilt of the tiller can be adjusted for easier access to the levers.
- **Speed dial:** A speed dial or switch on the instrument panel controls the speed of the device. Speed can be further adjusted by altering the pressure placed on the levers. Releasing the levers automatically activates the brakes.
- **Seat and backrest:** The height of the back of the seat and the headrest can be varied to provide different levels of support. On some scooters, adjustments can also be made to the seat position and armrest height.

## Types of scooter: 3-wheel, 4-wheel or portable?

### 3-wheel scooters:

- 3-wheel scooters generally have more legroom and may be easier to steer for people who have reduced upper body strength. These scooters may therefore be a good option for indoor use. However, if indoor use is the primary goal, a powered wheelchair may be a better choice.
- 3-wheel scooters can be less stable than 4-wheel scooters. For example, when going up/down ramps, when moving over uneven footpaths.



### 4-wheel scooters:

- 4-wheel scooters generally have a larger turning circle, however they are more stable on uneven surfaces than 3-wheel devices.
- A larger 4-wheeled scooter, with greater battery capacity, may be required for a hilly environment or for travelling longer distances.



### Portable scooters:

- Portable scooters are designed to be disassembled so that they can be transported in a car.
- The components can be heavy so you may need help to load them into the car.
- Some people can find it difficult to reassemble these devices.
- Portable scooters are usually smaller than other devices so they can generally carry less weight. They may not be suitable for taller or larger people or for transporting loads, such as shopping.
- They have low ground clearance so they may be more likely to get stuck on kerbs and may be less stable on uneven surfaces.



## **Other features and safety considerations:**

### **Suitability for travelling on public transport**

Not all devices are suitable for use on public transport. There are size and weight limits as well as manoeuvrability requirements. Some modes of transport (taxis and coaches) also require the device to have anchor points to fix the device to the floor of the vehicle. Accessibility also varies depending on the type of transport. You can discuss these requirements with the supplier and your occupational therapist. For more information including the required dimensions for public transport see pages 22 onwards.

### **Suitability for travelling in a wheelchair accessible taxi or transporting in your car**

There are also size restrictions for travelling in a wheelchair accessible taxi, and the device must have anchor points fitted as described above. For more information and the size requirements see page 29. If you intend to transport the device in your car, or in a trailer, you will need to consider size, weight and the need for car modifications or equipment such as a hoist or ramp.

### **Headlights, taillights and reflectors**

Headlights, taillights and reflectors are generally standard features on scooters to support visibility. Visibility features may also be installed on powered wheelchairs. If they are installed, it is a good idea to use the headlights during the day, particularly in overcast weather. Using a device at night, even with lights, is not recommended.

### **Visibility flag**

A visibility flag is advisable. The flag should be positioned on a pole at the back of the device.

### **Side mirror(s)**

A side mirror helps you to see behind you. It will not allow you to see everything in your environment so you must also look around and behind you to check for pedestrians and traffic.

### **Tyres**

Most mobility devices have pneumatic tyres. The pressure in these tyres needs to be checked regularly so consider whether you can maintain the tyres or whether you can get help to do that. Solid tyres require less maintenance but they provide less cushioning. They also provide less traction on rough terrain.

### **Carry bags**

Most scooters have a small wire basket on the front for carrying small loads such as shopping. A rear carry bag can also be fitted to the back of the scooter. There is limited space on powered wheelchairs for carrying items. Never overload your mobility device as this can affect device stability.

### **Holder for other mobility aids on scooters**

You may need to walk short distances to access shops and other buildings that are not scooter accessible. A holder can be mounted to the rear of the scooter so that you can carry your walking stick or frame with you. Make sure you can safely load and unload your mobility aid from the scooter.

### **Weather canopy for scooters**

Weather canopies should be used with caution. In windy weather, a scooter with a canopy may become unstable. Canopies can also restrict your vision and ability to scan the environment. The added canopy height may also make public transport use more difficult.

## Checklist 2. Choosing the right device for you

If you have decided that a motorised mobility device is suitable for you, you should now start to think about what type of device might be best. Complete the following checklist and share your answers with your health professional and supplier so that they can advise you. The checklist will help identify device features that suit your needs. This will help to narrow down your options so you can then trial suitable device(s) in the environments in which you plan to use the devices. If you need to use a powered wheelchair, there are many more things you will need to think about than listed here: your occupational therapist will help you.

### 1 How do you plan to use your device?

a. What activities will you use your device for? Select all that apply:

- Going to the shops                       Visiting friends/family  
 Going to doctors' appointments       Generally moving around my community  
 Other

b. How often do you think you will use your device?

- Every day                                       Most days  
 Once or twice a week                       Less than once per week

c. For the activities listed above, what distance would you need to travel from home? (including the return journey):

- Less than 1km       1 to 5km       More than 5km       Not sure

d. Do you plan to transport the device by car?

- Yes       No       Not sure

e. Do you plan to use the device on public transport? Select all that apply:

- Metropolitan travel**       Train                       Tram                       Bus  
**Regional travel**               Train                       Coach

f. Do you plan to take your device in a taxi?

- Yes       No       Not sure

g. Do you plan to take the device on a plane/cruise ship?

- Yes       No       Not sure

### 2 What type of terrain will you need to travel on?

a. Where will you mainly use your device?

- Mainly indoors       Mainly outdoors       Both indoors and outdoors

b. What types of outdoor surfaces might you travel on? Select all that apply.

- Footpaths       Bricks or pavers       Gravel or unmade surfaces  
 Grass       Other

c. Will you need to travel up or down slopes? Select all that apply.

- Steep slopes       Gentle slopes       Level surfaces

d. Will you need to negotiate kerbs or gutters?

- Yes       No       Not sure

e. Will you need to travel over train or tram tracks (e.g. negotiate railway crossings or cross roads with trams)?

- Yes       No       Not sure

### 3 What about storing your device?

a. Do you have a secure, accessible under-cover storage area?

- Yes       No       Not sure

b. Is there a power point in the storage area for battery charging?

- Yes       No       Not sure

### 4 What else do you need to think about?

a. Do you have difficulty using your arms or hands (e.g. gripping, feeling objects, stretching your arms out in front)?

- Yes       No

b. Do you have difficulty keeping your legs/feet in a comfortable position (e.g. involuntary movements, reduced foot sensation)?

- Yes       No

c. Do you need support to keep upright, comfortable and stable in the seat?

- Yes       No

d. Do you need to carry a walking aid on your device (stick, frame, walker)?

- Yes       No

e. Do you need to carry shopping or other items (e.g. oxygen) on the device?

- Yes       No       Not sure

## Other things to consider

### Should you buy or hire?

How long will you need the device? If it is only for a short time (e.g. 3-6 months) while you recover from an illness or injury, then hiring will likely be a cost-effective option. Also consider hiring as a means of trialling the device you think will best suit your needs before you make a final purchasing decision.

### What about purchasing a second-hand device?

You may be able to buy a device second-hand, but consider the following:

- Does the device suit your needs?
- Does a warranty still apply to the device?
- What is the service history and what servicing options are available?
- Has the device been involved in any incidents/crashes?
- Does the device comply with the Australian Standards? See below.

### What funding options are available?

There are various options for funding the purchase of mobility devices, and the assessment and training services provided by an occupational therapist. Funding sources include the State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP), National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Transport Accident Commission (TAC), Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and workers compensation through WorkSafe Victoria. An occupational therapist can help determine whether you are eligible and assist with the application process.

### Does the device meet Australian Standards?

All motorised mobility devices should be registered with the Therapeutics Goods Administration (TGA) before they are available for sale. This is because mobility devices are classified as therapeutic devices and should only be used by people who have a legitimate medical or disability need to use one. There are also Australian Standards for the design, manufacture and testing of motorised mobility devices to ensure high quality and safety (AS/NZ 3695 and AS/NZ 3696).







The standards are voluntary, which means suppliers may legally sell devices that do not meet the standards. You should request a written statement of compliance with the standards and evidence of TGA listing from the supplier or hirer. You may be able to get more information from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

### **Does the device comply with the Victorian Road Rules (Road Safety Road Rules 2017)?**

The Road Rules require that motorised mobility devices cannot be capable of travelling more than 10 km/hour on level ground. The device itself (without a person or other items) must not weigh more than 110kg (unladen mass) and they should only be made to carry one person. Ask the supplier to provide a written statement that the device complies with the Victorian Road Rules.

### **What about warranty, servicing and maintenance?**

As for any product you buy, be sure you are aware of the warranty details, servicing and maintenance requirements, and your rights under Consumer Law. Initial set up and basic maintenance should form part of your training with the supplier and/or occupational therapist. You should have written instructions on how to operate and maintain your device. Your supplier should provide a user manual.

### **What about breakdowns?**

It is important to know what service is available if there is a breakdown and you are away from home. You can subscribe to an emergency assist service. See Useful Contacts on page 32.

### **Do you need insurance?**

It is a good idea to have public liability insurance in case you are involved in an incident and someone is injured, or property is damaged. See Useful Contacts on page 32.

## Using your motorised mobility device

So, you have chosen a device that suits your needs, and you are ready to get out and about. Before you do, there are some important things to remember to support your own comfort and safety as well as the safety of others. The advice in this section aims to keep you and others safe.

### What are the safety risks?

It is estimated that more than 1,000 people are admitted to hospital in Australia each year as a result of injuries associated with mobility scooters (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019).<sup>1</sup> Almost all injuries are to scooter users themselves and these result from: the scooter tipping over; a collision with a stationary object; the user tripping or falling from the scooter or a collision with a moving object.

Pedestrians and other road users such as cyclists can also be injured. A collision with a heavy moving device such as a mobility scooter can cause serious injury and falls, even at relatively low speeds.

1 AIHW, McKenna K, Tovel A and Pointer S (2019). Mobility scooter-related injuries and deaths. Injury research and statistics series no. 121. Canberra, AIHW



### **One of the most important things you need to do to protect your safety and that of others is to learn how to use your device properly.**

This means getting thorough hands-on training from an occupational therapist who will work with your supplier to help you understand how to use your device in and around your local environment.

Training will cover:

- Basic operations such as turning and reversing
- How to manage the device in different circumstances and on different terrains
- How to cross roads safely including how to negotiate kerbs
- How to avoid tipping over while using your device
- How to charge and store your device, and much more.



## The safety of others

You are responsible for using your mobility device safely around others:

- Travel at walking pace when around other pedestrians and slow to match their speed. Be particularly careful in areas such as train platforms and shopping centres.
- Observe ahead and around you for children, cyclists, potholes/uneven footpaths, and people who are distracted while using their mobile phones. Check your mirror frequently.
- These devices are intended to carry one person only – you should not allow other people to travel on the device with you.
- In shopping areas, keep closer to the kerb and away from shop doorways to avoid colliding with people coming out of shops.
- Be careful when changing direction. Turn your head to look around and behind (don't just rely on your mirror).
- Travel in single file – don't travel next to another motorised mobility device.
- Don't use your mobile phone while also operating your device.
- Avoid other distractions such as using headphones to listen to the radio or music.
- It is a good idea to have public liability insurance in case you are involved in an incident that results in property damage or injury to someone else. See Useful Contacts on page 32.



## Your safety: General tips

You can improve your safety by following these tips:

- You should travel on the footpath whenever possible. If there are no footpaths (such as in country areas), and you have no alternative but to travel on a road, plan to use quieter roads. It is important to face oncoming traffic with your lights on and stay as close to the kerb as possible. Return to the nature strip or footpath as soon as possible.
- A visibility flag is also helpful as the bright colour and movement will help draw people's attention to you. The flag should be positioned on a pole at the back of the device.
- Consider with your occupational therapist if you need to use additional safety/comfort items routinely, e.g. gloves, foot/wrist splints, or a bicycle helmet.
- Avoid hills if possible. Going uphill uses more battery power and downhill puts more strain on your device. It is also more difficult to keep your balance. If hills are unavoidable, travel slowly. Try to avoid turning or stopping on a slope as there is an increased risk of tipping over.
- Watch out for cars reversing out of driveways or shopping centre carparks.
- Avoid being close to the back of parked or reversing cars. The driver may not be able to see you.
- Try crossing in front of parked cars if you must cross in their vicinity.
- Slow down to make a turn. Faster speeds increase the risk of tipping over.
- To be more visible, use your lights during the day.
- Avoid travelling at night or in dim light.
- **Under the Road Rules, your device cannot travel faster than 10km per hour.**
- **However, it is your responsibility to travel at a speed that is appropriate for the conditions, including at a similar pace to other pedestrians (usually about 5km/hour).**
- It is also important to travel at a speed where you can stop quickly or turn without the risk of tipping over in case of an unexpected event.
- If you are carrying bags, shopping or walking aids, be careful about the extra weight and the effect it may have on the balance of your device. Ensure that bags do not get in the way of controls, restrict your view or obscure your lights. Ensure they do not affect other pedestrians.



This sign means that no pedestrians are allowed, for example at an entry to a carpark or on carpark ramps. This means you can't travel past this sign when walking or using a motorised mobility device.

## Your safety: Crossing the road

Users of motorised mobility devices are very vulnerable around larger fast-moving traffic. It is very important to be looking around you and fully concentrating when you cross the road.

- Cross the road in safe locations. Avoid crossing on bends or hills, where you don't have a clear view of oncoming traffic. Pedestrian crossings and traffic lights are the best places to cross the road.
- At pedestrian lights, you can cross the road when the green walking man appears. You must not commence crossing the road when the walking man is red or is flashing red. If it starts flashing when you are part way you must continue to cross – don't stop.
- Always cross the road by the shortest route. Before you cross always check that there is an accessible crossing point on the other side (e.g. driveway or ramp).
- To minimise the risk of tipping over, approach driveways, crossover ramps or kerbs head-on rather than at an angle.
- Before commencing to cross, check that approaching cars are slowing down or stopped. Make eye contact with the driver to make sure they have seen you.
- If you must cross at an intersection with no lights or signs, check carefully for any approaching or turning cars. You must not start to cross a road in front of an approaching car.
- When crossing at a roundabout, all pedestrians and motorised mobility device users must give way to all traffic in or entering the roundabout. The driver does not have to give way to you and will be busy checking for other vehicles so might not see you.
- If crossing a bicycle path, you must give way to cyclists.
- To cross railway or tram tracks, always cross at a right angle (90 degrees) and try to cross at pedestrian cross overs to avoid getting the wheels caught in the tracks.



## Stopping and parking (for scooter users)

- Before getting off your device, make sure it is switched off and remove the key. That way the motor will not engage, and the device will not move while you get on/off. Similarly, make sure you are comfortably seated before you turn on the device to avoid accidentally knocking the controls.
- Try not to park on slopes. This places extra strain on the mobility scooter motor when you start up again. It is also more difficult to get on and off if you are not on flat ground and you might lose your balance and fall.
- Consider others when parking to make sure your device is not obstructing doorways, thoroughfares or driveways. When parking on the footpath, make sure that there is room for others including people with prams and other devices to use the footpath.
- You cannot use vehicle car parks to park your motorised mobility device, even if the parks are designated as parking spaces for people with disabilities.



## Road rules for pedestrians on motorised mobility devices

Motorised mobility devices are designed to be used on footpaths. The road rules that apply to users of motorised mobility devices are the same road rules that apply to pedestrians. It is important that you know the rules and obey them. Although a driver licence is not required to use a motorised mobility device and devices do not need to be registered, users must still have the capacity to take responsibility for using them safely. This includes knowing and applying road rules. Refer to page 3.





# Things to check before each trip

## Batteries

- Are the batteries fully charged? Never fully drain the batteries. Be aware of how long you can travel on fully charged batteries.

***Note that the device will not start if it is connected to the power supply.***

- Is there a RECHARGE station available on your trip? (See Useful Contacts on page 32)

## Tyres

- Are the tyres inflated to the correct pressure? Under-inflated tyres may cause stability problems and use more battery power as resistance increases.
- If you tend to get flat/damaged tyres, it is recommended you carry spare inner tubes.

## Your judgement

- Are you fit to operate the device?
- Have you recently been unwell or taken medicines, alcohol or other drugs that may affect your judgment, vision or movement?
- Have the dosages of your medicines been changed recently?
- If your health has changed, you should check with your doctor before you use your device.

## Seat

- Is the seat adjusted to the correct position?
- Some seats turn sideways to make it easier to get on/off. If your seat does this, make sure it is facing forwards and is locked in position before you move.

## Weather

- Is it sunny? Do you need a hat and sunscreen?
- Is it wet? Do you need a raincoat? If it's wet, make sure that the controls are protected from the weather.
- Be very careful that clothes, umbrellas or canopies do not make it hard for you to watch and listen for traffic and other road users sharing the footpath.

## Clothing

- Are you dressed appropriately for the weather?
- Are you wearing light-coloured clothing so you can be seen more easily?
- Are you wearing suitable shoes to ensure you are steady when getting on and off the device?

### Personal items

- Do you have your sunglasses and prescription glasses for distance if you need them?
- Do you know where you might access disability friendly toilets?

### Mobile phone

- Do you have a charged mobile phone? This makes it easy to contact someone if you have a problem. **Do not use the phone when moving on the device.**

### Identification

- Do you have an easily accessible ICE (In Case of Emergency) phone contact? This enables others to contact this person if something happens to you.
- Do you have a waterproof label on the device with your first name and mobile phone number? This enables others to contact you in the event of loss or if your device is obstructing entrances.

### Time of Day

- Will it be very busy – should you plan the trip at a different time of day?
- Will it get dark while you are out? Avoid travelling at dusk or at night.



# Accessing public transport in Victoria

This section summarises the important things to consider if you are planning to use public transport. More information is available on the Public Transport Victoria website (see Useful Contacts on page 32). For information about using public transport in other states and territories see the websites of local operators.

## Make sure your device is suitable to be used on public transport

Our public transport system aims to be as accessible as possible for people with disabilities, including those who use a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair. However, not all devices are suitable for use on public transport. So, this is something you should plan for when choosing your device (see page 6). Weight, size and manoeuvrability need to be considered.

- **Weight** The maximum total laden weight allowed for access to trains, trams and buses is 300kg. This refers to the combined weight of the device with the user, any luggage and added accessories.
- **Height** Only wheelchair accessible taxis have a defined height limit (1500mm) (refer page 29), however all users should be mindful of the height of items added on their device, such as visibility flags or canopies, when using other public transport.
- **Length & width** For access to trains, trams and V/Line trains and coaches, the device must fit within a space of 1300mm by 800mm. For access to buses, the allowed maximum mobility device dimensions are 1300mm long by 750mm wide.
- **Height of base from the ground** To be able to be used on buses, the height of the device base must be no more the 300mm from the ground to fit between the wheel axles of the bus.
- **Manoeuvrability** The device also needs to be manoeuvrable to get on and off the transport vehicle, including using ramps, and moving around within the vehicle. Specifically, the device should be able to turn 180 degrees within an area 2070mm x 1540mm. While a device may be capable of these manoeuvres, the user will require instruction and significant practice to be able to complete these manoeuvres independently.

**TRY BEFORE  
YOU RIDE**



This event gives motorised mobility users an opportunity to practise getting on and off public transport while the vehicles are stationary, and to ask questions from customer support staff.

<https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/more/travelling-on-the-network/accessibility/try-before-you-ride/>



## Dimensions and weight requirements for use on public transport



## Travellers Aid

[travellersaid.org.au](http://travellersaid.org.au)

Travellers Aid operates out of Flinders Street, Southern Cross and Seymour stations, with services designed to empower people with travel related challenges to connect, engage and participate within their communities, through the use of public transport.

Services include mobility equipment hire, accessible bathrooms, meals assistance, internet access, charging for mobility devices and a companion service.

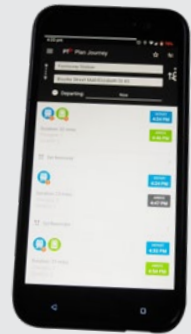
Services are described in detail on their website. Some services require bookings.

## Make sure you can use your device safely on public transport

- It is your responsibility to learn how to use your device safely on public transport, including accessing stations and platforms, getting on and off (including using boarding ramps), positioning the device in the allocated space, and negotiating around other public transport users and their belongings (shopping bags, prams, bicycles etc). This usually requires formal instruction and considerable practice.
- There are various factors influencing the ease of access and use of different types of public transport, and there are different requirements for trains, trams, buses, V/Line coaches and taxis (see following pages). You will need to understand these differences and practice the routes that you wish to use when you are not under time pressure, preferably with another person who can help you. As your experience and route familiarity increase, you will be developing the confidence to travel independently.
- Use a slow speed when getting on and off all modes of public transport and when travelling on train or tram platforms.
- Clearly communicate your intentions to other passengers/staff, for example when moving past other passengers.

### Travel tips

- It is a good idea to allow plenty of time and to plan your route, especially if you are connecting with different modes of transport. Use the PTV Journey Planner [ptv.vic.gov.au/journey/](http://ptv.vic.gov.au/journey/)
- The PTV mobile app also contains a wealth of travel and facility information, and enables you to call PTV directly from the app. The PTV website has detailed information about the app features and how to use the app. Additional apps are available for trams (tramTRACKER) and V/line trains and coaches.
- Since there are limited designated accessible spaces on public transport, travelling in off-peak times may be easier and less stressful.
- Sometimes the designated accessible spaces may already be occupied and you won't be able to get on.
- Consider accessibility facilities such as lifts on train platforms and ramps, as well as toilets and recharging points. Many Municipal Councils have 'Mobility Maps' to help you identify locations for these features.
- You may be eligible for a concession fare or free travel pass. For more information refer to PTV. [ptv.vic.gov.au](http://ptv.vic.gov.au)



## Travelling on metropolitan trains

### General requirements

- All metropolitan stations are accessible via ramps or lifts, except for Heyington Station, which has stairs.
- The steepness and length of access ramps both into stations, and to platforms, vary from station to station. This means that accessibility for individual users may vary depending on their device and their skills or experience. Wet weather conditions may also affect accessibility. You should consider the accessibility of individual stations and the weather conditions when planning your trip.
- All metropolitan trains are wheelchair accessible and have allocated spaces for passengers using mobility aids, prams etc.
- To travel on a train, your scooter or wheelchair must be:
  - no more than 1300mm long
  - no more than 800mm wide
  - no more than 300kg in weight, including you, any luggage and accessories.

### Getting on and off the train

- The wheelchair symbol marked on the platform indicates the boarding point – this is close to where the front of the train will stop.
- There may not be a wheelchair symbol at the boarding point on the platform at some of the bigger stations, where the trains travel in both directions. If this is the case, go to the end of the platform in your direction of travel and wait to board near the white platform marker. You can also



ask station staff to assist you to find the accessible boarding point.

- The driver will provide a ramp to help you get on and off the train. Some stations have a raised section of platform near the front of the train, which may allow you to board the train independently, without assistance from the driver and a ramp.
- Advise the driver of your destination station so that they can help you get off the train using the ramp. Or, if possible, write down your destination, or the name of the interchange station (if you are changing trains) on a note to provide to the driver.

### More information

You can find more information about travelling on metropolitan trains, including station facilities, such as lifts or accessible toilets, on the Metro Trains website (see Useful Contacts).

## Travelling on trams

### General requirements

- Not all tram routes and stops are disability accessible. You will need to plan your trip to identify accessible tram routes and accessible stops, including stops for getting on and off the tram.
- Not all trams are accessible. Low-floor trams are accessible, and they have allocated spaces for passengers using mobility aids or prams. This area is marked on the floor with a wheelchair symbol. High-floor trams have steps, so they are not suitable for manual or powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters.
- You can find out if a route has low-floor trams and which stops are accessible by using tramTRACKER or the route guides on the Yarra Trams website (see Useful Contacts).
- If there is a digital display at the tram stop a 'wheelchair' symbol will indicate which trams are low-floor trams.
- To travel on a tram, your scooter or wheelchair must be:
  - no more than 1300mm long
  - no more than 800mm wide
  - no more than 300kg in weight, including you and any luggage and accessories.

### Getting on and off the tram

- Position your device in a central position on the tram stop, ready to get on. A wheelchair symbol on the doors indicates which doors to use. These doors will be close to the allocated space within the tram.



- Where possible, move the device in a forward direction (not in reverse). This is safest in terms of being able to see where you are going and negotiate around other passengers. If you need to reverse to move into the allocated space, check behind you first.
- There may be a small gap between the tram stop platform and the tram. Your device should be able to negotiate this without difficulty, however practice can help your confidence.
- Unlike on trains, tram drivers may not be able to leave their cabin to assist you.

### More information

You can find more information about travelling on the tram network using a mobility aid on the Yarra Trams website (see Useful Contacts).

## Travelling on metropolitan buses

### General requirements

- Using buses can be difficult with a scooter or powered wheelchair. The wheel hub and the driver's cage position limit space to move and turn for getting on and off.
- Most local buses in Victoria are low-floored, however the layout inside the vehicle can vary. Low-floor buses can be lowered by the driver, so they are closer (lower) to the kerb. The driver can also use a ramp to help you get on and off.
- Low-floor buses have allocated spaces for passengers using wheelchairs, mobility aids and prams. The accessible areas are centrally located in the bus and are marked on the floor with a wheelchair symbol.
- To travel on a bus, your scooter or wheelchair must be:
  - no more than 1300mm long
  - no more than 750mm wide
  - no more than 300mm from the ground
  - no more than 300kg in weight, including you, any luggage and accessories.
- The device must also be able to go up and down a ramp.

### Getting on and off the bus

- You must get on and off via the front door of the bus.
- Move in a forward direction to get on and get off the bus.
- The driver will set up the ramp and lower the bus.

- There may be flip-down seats in the spaces allocated for mobility devices on the bus. The driver will fold these up if empty to allow space for you. If the space is occupied by passengers, the passengers will need to move to another seat.
- There is a 'wheelchair' call button/bell to tell the driver when you want to get off the bus.
- You will need to turn your device around (inside the bus) to get off. You may need to make multiple turns to turn around. This can be difficult if there are other passengers using the accessible spaces.



### More information

Find more information about travelling on metropolitan buses by visiting the operator's website. (See Useful Contacts.)

## Travelling on regional coaches and trains

### General requirements

- Passengers using a motorised mobility device can access most V/Line trains and coaches.
- V/Line has a number of different trains and the layouts vary. You can check the V/Line website or app to find out what train will be operating on the service you want.



- Most V/Line coaches have an allocated space for mobility aids. To travel on a V/Line coach your mobility aid must have anchor points. The coach driver will assist you to secure your device to the anchor points.
- All V/Line stations have step-free entry. To find out if a station has facilities such as a lift or accessible toilet, search for the station name on the V/Line website or the V/Line app. You can also find station information by clicking on the station name on an electronic timetable or journey planner page.
- To travel on a V/Line train or coach, your scooter or wheelchair must be:
  - no more than 1300mm long
  - no more than 800mm wide
  - no more than 300mm from the ground
  - no more than 300kg in weight, including you, any luggage and accessories.

### Getting on and off regional services

- To get on a V/Line train, wait on the platform in the 'Boarding Assistance Zone'. The conductor will assist you to get on and off the train.
- For coach services, the coach driver can help you.

### More information

For more information about travelling on V/Line train or coach services see the V/Line website (See Useful Contacts).



## Travelling in a wheelchair accessible taxi

- Mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs can be carried in a wheelchair accessible taxi.
- You cannot sit on your mobility scooter while the vehicle is moving. You must sit in a fixed seat in the vehicle and use the seatbelt for that seat.
- Wheelchair users can remain in their wheelchair provided they wear a seatbelt.
- All devices must be safely restrained in the vehicle regardless of whether the user is sitting in them. This means that all devices should have four anchor points fitted (two at the front and two at the rear) to enable the driver to safely restrain the device to the floor of the vehicle.
- To travel in a wheelchair accessible taxi, your scooter or wheelchair (with you seated in it) must be:
  - no more than 1300mm long
  - no more than 800mm wide
  - no more than 1500mm in height.



## Checklist 3. Are you and your device ready to use public transport?

Using public transport can be very challenging and requires careful planning and practice. This checklist will help you to prepare for using your mobility scooter or powered wheelchair on the Victorian public transport system. It does not replace instruction and practice. **You must only use public transport if you have the skills and capacity to do so safely.**

First, think about what type of transport you wish to use. Then, answer the rest of the questions. If you answer YES to questions relevant to your transport choice you may be ready to travel on public transport. If you answer NO, we recommend you seek more information or assistance (e.g. through an occupational therapist) to overcome any issues you have identified and to gain practical training.

1. Which type/s of transport do you plan to use?

- Metropolitan:**  Trains  Trams  Buses  
**Regional:**  Trains  Coaches  
**Other:**  Wheelchair accessible taxis

- |  | Yes                   | No                    |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2. Does your device meet the size and weight requirements for the type of transport you wish to use?   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Have you planned which transport routes you would like to travel on?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Have you visited the PTV and operators' websites and journey planning apps to find relevant practical information?                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Have you visited the locations of these routes to understand the accessibility of stops and boarding conditions (e.g. undercover waiting area)? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Have you established the locations and operation of amenities such as toilets and recharging points at the stations or stops you wish to use?   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Do you have the skills, capability and confidence to use the transport types you have selected? Specifically:

- |   |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 7. Can you read the timetable and work out whether the transport is accessible?               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Can you use technology such as the PTV app and tramTRACKER to assist in planning journeys? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Can you safely manoeuvre your device in narrow and small spaces?                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Can you safely manoeuvre your device around other people and in a crowded environment?    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



|   | Yes                   | No                    |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 11. Can you reach out and hold on to handrails to steady your device while travelling?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. Can you use the small ramps used to board and exit trains and buses?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. Can you get on and off the small lifts used for V-line coaches?   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. Can you travel up and down steep ramps (to reach train platforms)?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15. Can you use lifts? These may be needed to access and exit some train platforms.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16. Are you confident crossing over the small gap between the tram and raised tram stop?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 17. Are you confident crossing tram track crossings and train level crossings?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 18. Can you manage interactions with staff and other passengers (e.g. despite having speech or hearing difficulties)?   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 19. Are you confident managing the ticketing aspect of travel (e.g. handling Myki card)?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 20. Do you know how and where to get help if you need it (e.g. if there is a timetable change, if you miss an accessible stop, if you need help getting on and off)?  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 21. Have you had instruction about how to use public transport, such as through an occupational therapist or by participating in relevant events, such as the Try Before You Ride events? See page 22 of this resource. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



# Useful contacts

## **Road Safety Victoria and VicRoads (Department of Transport)** [vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au)

VicRoads provides resources (including this brochure) for motorised mobility device users so that they are aware of the pedestrian road rules and know how to use devices responsibly and safely.

## **Local support & facilities**

### **Municipal Councils**

Municipal Council websites can provide useful information about accessibility, including accessible transport stops, the location of charging stations and accessible community facilities.

### **Council of the Ageing (Victoria)** [cotavic.org.au](http://cotavic.org.au)

Council of the Ageing (COTA) represents the interests and rights of people aged 50+ in Victoria. They offer programs, events and information addressing a wide range of issues relevant to older Victorians.

## **Health advice**

### **Occupational Therapy Australia** [otaus.com.au](http://otaus.com.au)

OT Australia is the peak professional body representing occupational therapists. The website provides useful information to help you find an occupational therapist who specialises in motorised mobility device assessment and training.

### **Local health services**

Local health services may offer occupational therapy out-patient services to support mobility assessment and training. Ask to speak to someone in the occupational therapy department.

## **Suppliers**

### **Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia** [atsa.org.au](http://atsa.org.au)

ATSA is the industry body representing suppliers of mobility aids. They can help you find a supplier and have information resources and events for consumers.

## **Insurance, breakdown assistance & charging**

### **Blue Badge Insurance Australia** [bluebadgeinsurance.com.au](http://bluebadgeinsurance.com.au)

Blue Badge specialises in comprehensive insurance for people with reduced mobility and disabilities. Products include comprehensive insurance for scooters and wheelchairs, as well as vehicle insurance for vehicles modified to accommodate people with disabilities as either drivers or passengers.

### **RACV** [racv.com.au](http://racv.com.au)

RACV Emergency Wheelchair and Scooter assistance is a breakdown service for users. Members receive up to 8 call outs per year to assist with flat tyres or batteries or minor mechanical repairs. A wheelchair accessible taxi will be arranged if required. Users must carry spare tyre tubes for tyres to be repaired.

### **Recharge points**

Most local councils have established accessible locations with suitable power sources that enable motorised mobility device users to safely recharge their devices at no cost. (For example, libraries, neighbourhood centres.) Note you need to bring your own charging cable.

Contact the Council Access and Inclusion officer or check their website using key words "recharge points".

## Public transport

### **Public Transport Victoria (Department of Transport)** [ptv.vic.gov.au](http://ptv.vic.gov.au)

The Public Transport Victoria website provides useful information about using public transport, including metropolitan and regional services. Information to assist with journey planning, ticket information and changes to services is also provided. Mobile device apps also help you when you are out and about. You can call PTV to discuss your needs on 1800 800 007.

There are PTV Hubs where staff can assist you with your transport needs. They are located at Southern Cross Station, Geelong – Westfield Shopping Centre and Bendigo – Bendigo Marketplace. Check the PTV website for opening hours.

### **Metropolitan buses (the main service provider is Transdev)** [transdevmelbourne.com.au](http://transdevmelbourne.com.au)

The Transdev website provides specific travel information for 49 bus routes across Melbourne to assist with journey planning and accessibility requirements. Other bus operators may also have similar information.

### **Metro Trains** [metrotrains.com.au](http://metrotrains.com.au)

The Metro Trains website provides information to assist with planning your travel on metropolitan trains. Ticketing, timetables and service changes are also provided.

### **Yarra Trams** [yarratrams.com.au](http://yarratrams.com.au)

The Yarra Trams website provides information to assist with planning your travel including route guides to identify accessible routes and stops. You can find accessible tram stops, by searching for

the stop name. You can also find stop information by clicking on the stop name in an electronic timetable or journey planner page. Ticketing, timetables and service changes are also provided on the website. The tramTRACKER app also provides information about accessible routes and whether a tram is low-floored.

### **V/Line** [vline.com.au](http://vline.com.au)

The V/Line website and app provide information to assist with planning your travel. This includes information about accessibility of train and coach services, as well as ticketing and service changes. V/Line also has available virtual tours of all trains used for regional services. You can use these to help plan your travel.

### **Travellers Aid** [travellersaid.org.au](http://travellersaid.org.au)

Travellers Aid is a non-for-profit organisation that provides support to public transport users including those who use motorised mobility devices. Services include travel information, a buggy service connecting metropolitan and regional services and mobility equipment hire. Travellers Aid Hubs are located at Flinders Street Station, Southern Cross Station and Seymour Station (regional). The Hubs also include other facilities (e.g. accessible toilets/showers and kitchen facilities) and carer assistance. You may need to book for some services.

### **Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria** [cpv.vic.gov.au](http://cpv.vic.gov.au)

This website provides information about using wheelchair accessible vehicles (taxi) including conditions of use and booking requirements.

