

New deal on wheels

EXCLUSIVE
IAN ROYALL
TRANSPORT REPORTER

Safety program targets e-scooter risks

THE dangers of e-scooters will be the focus of a new road safety initiative for young drivers.

A spate of injuries and the popularity of the electric-powered bikes among young Victorians has prompted the move by the police-backed Fit to Drive Foundation.

The e-scooter boom had led to confusion around their rules for use and safe riding techniques, Victoria Police Acting Assistant Commissioner for Road Policing Justin Goldsmith said.

"This is what happens

when there is a new and emerging transport option," he said.

Three inner city councils – Melbourne, Yarra and Port Phillip – as well as the City of Ballarat are trialling Lime and Neuron e-scooters for 12 months up to February. About 2.3 million trips have been taken in the past nine months.

The latest safety program addresses the use of electric scooters across the city.

"Outside of the trial they cannot be used on public roads," Assistant Commissioner Goldsmith said.

"They can only be used on private property, and also they need to know what the rules are in relation to the trial, and those rules are pretty explicitly laid out.

"We're talking about the rules and the dangers as well as the trauma statistics that we are seeing such as spiking hospitalisations and injuries and presentations to EDs (emergency departments)."

The move comes amid a high rate of serious injuries such as head and limb trauma, with the Herald Sun revealing in August that e-scooter and

e-bike-related admissions to the state's trauma centre had doubled from 24 in 2020-21 to 49 in 2021-22, while patients needing intensive care had almost quadrupled.

The new program, the Green Light Initiative, will start in Melbourne on Wednesday targeting the vulnerable 16-25 years age group and their supervising drivers.

Fit to Drive Foundation program director Laura Kemp said the initiative would tackle a range of road issues including e-scooter and tram safety.

"E-scooters are booming in

popularity but there is little information about what the rules are regarding their use, or how to actually use them safely," Ms Kemp said.

The two-hour program is delivered face-to-face.

"Working with the young person and their supervising driver, the program provides resources, information and practical tips related to the Graduated Licencing System," Ms Kemp said

Assistant Commissioner Goldsmith said distraction was a major concern among young drivers who had grown

up with mobile phones and other devices at hand.

"This is a generation that's been brought up with mobile phones and technology and they're very connected to social media and they get alerts off Snapchat and other apps.

"So we try to encourage to separate the two behaviours (driving and mobile phone use).

It's about establishing good habits in their driving careers."

Turning off phone notifications, or even putting the device in the glovebox or boot, would help break the temptation while on the road, he said.

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Cameron Smith with star junior golfers Zac, 6, and Fuyu, 10, and the Claret Jug from The Open. Picture: David Caird



SMITH DECLARES IT'S OPEN SEASON

MITCH RYAN

SUPERSTAR Aussie golfer Cameron Smith hopes to cap off his sensational year with a win at this week's Australian Open on the Victorian Sandbelt.

The world No. 3 is the firm favourite after claiming five golfing titles this year – and the Queenslander said he has the Open firmly in his sights.

"I haven't won [the Australian Open] yet, so this has been on my radar now for a long time," the 29-year old said.

"I've been close a few times and haven't quite got it done, so no better week then to win one in Melbourne."

If he does salute in the tournament, Smith – who has also made headlines this year for joining the controversial Saudi-backed LIV Golf tour – will be the first man since Robert Allenby in 2005 to claim the Australian Open and PGA in the same year.

MORE GOLF, PAGE 70

Urgent back surgery for Barnes

JIMMY Barnes has been forced to cancel all summer shows to undergo urgent hip and back surgery.

The 66-year-old rocker said five decades of belting out the hits while characteristically bent over at the waist have taken their toll.

Barnes recently cancelled a gig in Penrith citing "rising Covid cases" but it now appears the show couldn't go on due to the Working Class Man

suffering crippling pain.

He will play one more gig, at this weekend's Valo Adelaide 500, before having surgery and will be off the road for several months.

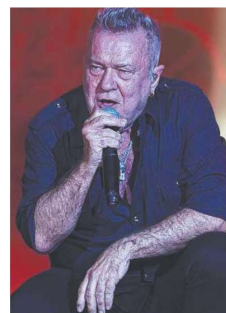
"I've been jumping off PAs and stomping around stages for nearly 50 years, but it's finally caught up with me."

Barnes said in a statement. "I've had niggling back and hip issues for years but things suddenly got a lot worse over the

last few weeks and I'm now in constant and severe pain. As everybody knows, it's against my religion to blow out gigs but the doctors tell me I need an operation as soon as possible and it will really limit my movement for a few months."

In 2007 Barnes underwent open heart surgery to replace a faulty aortic valve.

For all rescheduled dates, cancellations and ticket details, see jimmybarnes.com.



Jimmy Barnes

Credit cards costing us

MILLIONS of Australians have never changed their credit card and it could be costing them hundreds of dollars a year, according to new research by Finder.

A survey of 1057 respondents, 563 of which were credit card holders, revealed a whopping 55 per cent had never switched cards.

That's an estimated six million Aussies who have never changed their primary

credit card – a decision that could be costing hundreds of dollars each year in excess interest and missed rewards.

The research shows only 8 per cent of cardholders have changed their credit card in the past year. The remaining 35 per cent have switched more than a year ago.

Finder analysis shows credit card loyalty could cost the average cardholder \$153 a year.