

# Safety Fact Sheet

## Skate boards and Scooters



### What are skate boards and scooters?

Skate boards and scooters have become increasingly popular in the last few years in Australia. These recreational items can travel at fast speeds and are often used as a method of transport for children in urban areas.

### How may a child be injured?

#### Falls

- Children may lose their ability to control the scooter or skate board and fall off as a result.
- Children may lose control as a result of external factors such as the appearance of a sudden/unexpected obstacle in their riding path.
- Children may lose control of their scooter or skate board because of the absence or limited capacity of brakes.

#### Cuts, bruises, fractures and friction burns

- Children may sustain cuts, bruises, fractures and/or friction burns as a result of a crash/fall.

### How common are these injuries

In Victoria between the period July 1996 to June 2004, there were 7,315 injuries to children associated with small wheel vehicles (in-line skates, roller skates, skate boards and scooters). Of these 2668 (37%) were associated with skate boarding and 1600 (22%) with scooters.<sup>1</sup> There are no recent published statistics available for NSW.

Most injuries from scooters and skateboards occur from falls and collisions with fixed objects or pedestrians. This is usually the result of losing control or an inability to stop effectively. Skateboards do not have brakes. Scooters have limited braking capacity due to their small wheels, which provide a limited surface area for a braking mechanism. At greatest risk are young children, learners and experienced users performing tricks at high speed. The upper limb and wrist are the most common areas of injury. Other areas include elbows, knees and the head. Serious injuries and fatalities can also result when children on the road are hit by motor vehicles.

Contributing factors to injuries are:

- speed
- obstacles
- being unable to stop
- steep slopes
- hard landing surfaces

### Is there a Law or Australian Standard for skate boards?

There are no Australian Standards for skate boards.

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### Road Laws for Skateboard Users

The Roads and Traffic Authority in NSW advises that skate boards are best used in designated areas, such as ramps and skate parks. Skate boards may be used on footpaths, regardless of the age of the user, unless there are designated signs specifying that they are not to be used in those areas. Skate boards can only be used on minor roads (those with no lane lines marked) between dawn and dusk.<sup>2</sup>



### Road Laws for Scooter Users

The Roads and Traffic Authority in NSW states for children under 12 years, the rules for scooters are the same as the rules for skate boards.

Over the age of 12 years, cyclist laws apply. This includes compulsory use of helmets that meet Australian Standard (see Bicycle and Helmets Fact Sheet [http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/kidshealth/safety\\_factsheets/pdf/bicycles\\_and\\_helmets.pdf](http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/kidshealth/safety_factsheets/pdf/bicycles_and_helmets.pdf)).



As powered scooters are unable to be registered, they can only be used on private land.<sup>2</sup>

### Remember:

- Kaleidoscope and The Children's Hospital at Westmead do not recommend the use of skate boards and scooters for children under 5 years of age. Children between the ages of 6-10 years should always be supervised when skate boarding.<sup>3</sup>
- If you are using a second-hand skateboard or scooter, make sure that it is stable and in good condition.
- Ensure learners have a safe area to practice.
- Supervision of learners is recommended until the child is sufficiently skilled to use the skateboard /scooter safely.
- Do not allow children to skate down steep slopes, in traffic or poor light.
- Young children, learners and experienced users performing tricks are at highest risk of injury.
- Helmets, wrist, elbow and knee guards should be worn.
- Use of designated skate parks and ramps is recommended.
- When riding on the footpath, be aware of pedestrians, especially the elderly.
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that you check for products that have been recalled ([www.recalls.gov.au](http://www.recalls.gov.au)) prior to buying or borrowing an item for use with your child.



<sup>1</sup> Ashby K, Child Injury Associated with Small Wheel Devices, 2005, Monash University, <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/VISU/reports/wheel.html>

<sup>2</sup> Roads & Traffic Authority, What the Law Says and Safety Advice for Bicycles, Rollerblades, Scooters and Skateboards. RTA/Pub 03.132 ([http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/schoolcommunitylanguagebrochures/the\\_law\\_bicycles\\_english.pdf](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/schoolcommunitylanguagebrochures/the_law_bicycles_english.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Smartplay – Sports Medicine Australia [www.smartplay.com.au/vic/DocLib/Pub/DocLibDownload.asp?IngDocLibID=112&Filename=Skateboardin g.pdf](http://www.smartplay.com.au/vic/DocLib/Pub/DocLibDownload.asp?IngDocLibID=112&Filename=Skateboardin g.pdf)