

# Gopher Master



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Northern Area Community  
Road Safety Committee  
Project

January - June 2003

## Northern Areas Community Roads Safety Project.

Name of the project:

# *Gopher Muster*

Project Officer:

*Annette Zanker  
Project officer / Registered Nurse*

Project Development Officer:

*Annabel Axford  
Health Promotion Officer*

Health Unit:

*Rocky River Health Service Inc.  
Mill Street  
LAURA SA 5480*

Date of Commencement: January 2003.

Date of the Pilot Conclusion: June 2003.

Funding Body:

Transport SA



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## BACKGROUND:

The Northern Areas Council Road Safety Committee in February 2001, identified road safety needs of risk taking behavior in consultation with the community. The Northern Areas Council region has an increasing aged population with an increasing usage of motorized chairs / scooters as a mode of transport.

The Key identified issues to support the *Gopher Muster* project:

- Maintain independence for the aged people
- Projection for an increase in the aged population from 16.4% in 2001 to 20% by 2011 for people aged 65 years and over in the Mid North Region of South Australia (ABS Data)
- Mid North Region had a median age of 43 in 2001 (ABS Data)
- The ability for the aged residents to remain in the community
- Maintain and increase community based care for older people
- Transport (access, type and cost)
- Mental / emotional health and wellbeing of older people
- Promotion of service available to older people in our region.

The Key identified issues involving scooter usage are:

- Increased use of motorised wheel chair as a form of transport in the local town ships.
- Lack of education and understanding for elderly people and broader community about motorized chairs / scooters.
- The community have very little knowledge and understanding of the safe operating procedures for motorized chairs / scooters.

The Northern Areas Council Community Road Safety Committee formed a working party for this project. This included the Rocky River Health Service Inc., Port Pirie Regional Health Service Inc., Transport SA and SA Police. The occupational therapy department and SA Police developed a program, along with an information brochure, in consultation with other key stakeholders being Home Help Equipment, and Scooter City for displays and information about scooters. This facilitated informative and educational sessions for the older person and their families and the community on the safe use, responsibilities and availability of scooters.

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## PLANNING:

Numerous phone calls, emails and faxes were made to put the information together and involve the key stakeholders in the planning.

They were:

- Port Pirie Regional Health Service Occupational Therapists, regarding the content of the *Gopher Muster* and the Information Brochure that was developed.
- Motor Registrar Transport SA regarding the Third Party Bodily Insurance directed to contact the Motor Accident Commission and general road rules.
- Motor accident commission regarding information on the Third Party Bodily Insurance, directed to contact SGIC.

- SGIC, who were able to confirm the information and answer questions about the insurance from the Transport SA document, see appendix J.
- Australian Standers website search, with little information.
- SA Government Legislation Website search with very little information.
- Aged care coordinator of Belalie Lodge in Jamestown.
- Outreach nursing staff at Laura and Gladstone was consulted.
- SA Police were recruited for the Gopher Muster to deliver information on the road rules and road safety.
- Occupational Therapists recruited to deliver information on the requirements a person needs to think about, to obtain and to use a scooter safely, and the different types of insurance for scooters. The process and waiting period for obtaining a Domiciliary Care scooter was also highlighted.
- Retail representative from Home Help Equipment in Adelaide to attend the Gopher Musters with equipment and information. See attachment O.
- Retail representative from Scooter City in Port Pirie attended the Gopher Muster with equipment and information on scooters.

A meeting was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2003 with project officer, and the project development officer, and Transport SA. Apologies were Gladstone SA Police and Occupational Therapist from Port Pirie Regional Health Service Inc.

Meeting occurred with the Outreach Community Nurse, on the Gopher muster program and to discuss communities' perception to the planned workshops, and what type of information would be relevant to the local community.

The Venues were booked for each town at a facility that had disabled access, and a third *Gopher Muster* was added, to enable the people at Gladstone to bring their scooters along to the *Gopher Muster*.

The venues were:

Laura - Activity Room at the Rocky River Health Service Inc.  
 Jamestown - The RSL Hall, at the combined services hall.  
 Gladstone - The Senior Citizens Hall.

Six flags were purchased at \$15 each, as a lucky door prize, two at each session. See attachment G.

Questionnaires were developed for before and after the Gopher Muster, using the road rules, insurance information available, the occupational therapist checklist and examples of evaluation information available. See attachments B and L.

Production and printing of the brochure in partnership with the Occupational Therapy department at the Port Pirie Regional Health Service Inc. was also undertaken, see attachment H

Marketing was needed, and was undertaken by:

- Information to the ABC Radio, with community announcements, and an interview with Health Promotion Officer the SA Police representative from Gladstone.
  - Fliers being placed on notice boards, in doctors waiting rooms, to Senior Citizens groups, Aged Care facilities, Some local papers, The Better Living Group (community group), The Northern Areas Community Road Safety Committee and the Out Reach Nurses.
  - The Mid North Areas Health Promotion Officer were also informed of project, and sent fliers.
  - Speaking to community groups, about the Gopher Muster, such as the Activity Group, and the Better Living Group.
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### **TARGET POPULATION:**

Older people and disabled people in our community, their families and the wider community.

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### **GEOGRAPHIC AREA**

Northern Areas Council region, in Gladstone, Laura and Jamestown.

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## BUDGET

### MOTORISED WHEEL CHAIR ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS GRANT EXPENDITURE

Project Officer Wages (RN 48 hrs @ \$23.20844/hr)	1114.00
Plus On Costs @ 15%	167.10
Travel (103 kms @ \$0.30/km)	30.90
Phone + Fax	25.00
Stationary	7.50
Photocopying (670 x 0.05)	30.50
Catering	7.00
Scooter City Invoices (Flags)	90.00
RSL Hire (Jamestown)	<u>25.00</u>
	1500.00

#### In kind support funded by local bodies / organizations for the project

##### Rocky River Health Service Inc.

- Laura Outreach Nurse 10 hours @ \$ 30.00 \$300.00
- Gladstone Outreach Nurse 10 hour @ \$30.00 \$300.00
- Project Officer (RN) 48 Hours @ \$ 23.20844 \$1114.00

##### Port Pirie Regional Health Service Inc.

- Occupational Therapist 15 hours @ \$30.00 \$450.00

##### SA Police

- Gladstone SA Police Constable 6 hours @ \$30.00 \$180.00

##### Jamestown Hospital

- Health Promotion Officer 3 hour @ \$30.00 \$90.00

##### Belalie Lodge

- Care Co-ordinator 2 hour @ \$25.00 \$50.00

##### Senior Citizens

- President 1 hour @ \$20.00 \$20.00

##### Home Help Equipment from Adelaide

- Sales Representative 27 hours @ \$50.00 \$1350.00  
(Travel time 18 hours)

##### Scooter City from Port Pirie

- Manager / Sales Representative 12 hours @ \$40.00 \$480.00

## PROMOTION

*Gopher muster* was promoted using fliers (see attachment A), through:

- The Laura community notice boards
- Doctor's office waiting rooms
- Senior citizens group
- Activity day group
- Out reach nursing staff
- Word of mouth.
- In Jamestown
- The Belalie Lodge Director of Care
- The community notice board
- The Health Promotion Officer at the Jamestown Hospital also distributed the information.
- The Gazette
- In Gladstone
- The Community Notice boards
- The Health Centres waiting room
- By Out reach nursing staff
- The Activity day Group and
- Gladstone Gazette.

An interview on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May at 10 am, by ABC RADIO with SA Police and Rocky River Health Service Health Promotion Officer, went to air, about scooter safety, rules, and the *Gopher Muster*; ABC Radio also broadcast advertising on community notices.

The Better Living Group for the Rocky River Region also received fliers, and spoke about the *Gopher Muster*.

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## OUTCOMES FOR THE GOPHER MUSTER

Laura: 16 People attended from the community, 2 outreach nurses, 3 facilitators and 2 retail representatives. 4 of the community members were from outside the council area (Booleroo Centre and Crystal Brook) comments were very positive, One gentleman was unable to hear the speakers, and others had some difficulty hearing what had been said as well.

Jamestown: 11 people attended the *Gopher Muster*, 2 facilitators, except the Jamestown SA Police did not arrive, and 2 retail representatives, were also present.

7 of the community participants were from Belalie Lodge, and the rest lived in and around the Jamestown community.

Due to the disappointment voiced by the community members, that SA Police were not represented at the Jamestown *Gopher Muster*, a meeting with senior SA Police representative occurred, with positive outcomes.

Gladstone: 7 people from the community attended, 3 facilitators, and 2 retail representatives.



One lady had forgotten which day it was on, her friends contacted her to come. Feedback was very positive from this group. The facilitators disappointed with the small turn out.

One of the participants that won a flag now has it attached to his gopher, as he did not have one before, and is now more visible to other road and pedestrian users.

Participants raised concerns about the condition of footpaths, and the lack of footpaths in the Northern Areas Council region, and wanted to know how can they get the council to do something to improve them. The Activity Group had already voice the same concerns prior to the *Gopher Muster*, and the problem has been put to the Better Living Group in the Rocky River area to address on behalf of the community to the Northern Areas Council.

The Pre-Muster Questionnaire Results see attachment C 2. The majority of the participants did not know the speed limit on the footpath; however, the majority believed a slower speed was the correct speed. A very mixed result for the Third Party Bodily Insurance, with only half getting correct answer, and a great deal of discussion during the sessions on this topic. All but one person knew that no licence was required, and all but one person knew that only one person is allowed on a scooter at a time. A mixed result with doctor's authorisation, the majority with correct answer of no. All of these topics were covered within the information delivered and the brochure that each participant was given.

Port Pirie Scooter City representative would like the Crystal Brook Road Safety Group, to do the same type of education in Port Pirie.

There were 6 winners of the scooter flag lucky door prize. All were very happy to receive a new flag, or were going to give the flag to someone they knew who needed / wanted one.

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## PROCESS INDICATORS

Time of worker to spend on project

Up skilling of worker in health promotion and project work, planning and implementation.

Attendance:

Laura

- 16 community members
- 2 Outreach nursing staff
- 3 Facilitators
- 2 Retail representatives

Jamestown

- 11 Community members
- 2 Facilitators
- 2 Retail representatives

Gladstone

- 7 Community members
- 3 Facilitators

- 2 Retail representatives

Pre Gopher Muster Questionnaire results (see attachment C 2):

71% of the answers to the maximum speed on a footpath were incorrect, stating 5Km/hr instead of 10Km/hr; only 19% were correct, 10% unsure.

19% answered correctly that they were covered for third party bodily insurance, while 49% believed they were not, 32% unsure.

97% answered correctly that no licence is required to drive a scooter, while 3% answered that you did.

97% were correct in answering that only one person is allowed on a single seated scooter at a time, with 3% unsure.

13% thought doctors authority was needed to drive a scooter, 77% were correct in answering no to this question, with 10% unsure.

Brochures and information hand outs that were distributed (See attachment H):

- Motorised Wheelchairs and Scooter Information Brochure 33.
- Road Rules - Use of Motorised Wheelchair / scooters 16.
- ILEP Care and Use of Your Scooter 15.
- Transport SA (MR294) Wheelchair Drivers and the Law 13.
- Out and About with Diversional Therapy flier 4.
- Pre - Muster Questionnaires
- Post - Muster Questionnaires
- Evaluation Questionnaire of facilitators and retail representatives.

## IMPACT INDICATORS

Laura

"Information for use if I purchase a gopher, happy with the way it went."

"Passed this on to other gopher users." "Use of Microphone - inability to hear what was happening or being said."

"Pamphlet - very useful & informative."

"Pamphlet - brought home in case we need one, went very well. Very informative."

"Find out things he didn't know, like going with on coming traffic. Happy with everything."

"Problems with hearing."

"Think seriously about getting one."

"I learned more about speed or staying on the left on road and right of way rules."

"Superb"

"Us the information to chose a gopher which is most suited."

"Have been seeking information where we can."

Quotes from the Post - Muster Questionnaire sheets from participants.

## Jamestown

"It gave me pleasure to find information on GOPHAS. At present I am driving my car and I am hoping I can for a while yet. The GOPHAS can have an awarding effect for anyone who has trouble walking. The Muster was very interesting and it gave good information on handling etc. The road rules information and health checks seemed a good idea."

A quote from a gentleman in his eighties.

"More information as to the best road crossing the waterway and climbing on to the foot path. FROM both directions approach head on - much less chance of tipping over. More information on the 3<sup>rd</sup> party insurance cover."

"I think it would be better if a Police Officer was there to explain road rules. Some one from council to look at the state of foot paths and access to shops in Jamestown."

"A Policeman in attendance. Improvement in footpaths, curbs etc."

"Council up grade foot paths, Gophers must be used on foot paths and can only be used on roads where no paths exist."

"The Police should have been there to explain some of the road laws regards Gophers."

"Access to shops in Jamestown by way of ramps access to shops is as bad as anywhere in state."

Quotes from the Post - Muster Questionnaires.

One Gentleman stated it was not very well advertised, he contacted the council to find out more about it, as the advert in their local paper did not have all the details of location etc.

Most of the participants expressed their disappointment that the policeman did not come to discuss road rules and safety with them. The scooter drivers from Belalie Lodge have requested that the officer come to the lodge, and talk to them there.

## Gladstone

"I am keeping it to use when I begin to use a gopher."

A quote from a lady in her seventies, wanting more information to use her second hand scooter.

"How do I change this one to one of those new ones, and can I have a flag?"

A quote from a man in his eighties, with a scooter.

"I learned some new things today, that I didn't know."

A quote from a lady with a scooter in her eighties.

"Impressed with the information."

A quote from a lady in her sixties with a disabled husband.

"Had a little trouble hearing at times, and I didn't recognize that nice policeman."

A quote from a lady in her nineties with a scooter.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The length of time between advertising and the event, to be minimal due to majority of the age group, some did not remember from the advertising two weeks prior.
2. There may have been a better turnout for the Jamestown and Gladstone *Gopher Muster*, if it had been done as part of established group in the target population. I.e. Senior Citizens, Activity Day, Probus or Divisional Therapy. Then, this would not be out of the routine for the aged population, and may have had a better attendance, than the way it was run.
3. The Gopher Muster may require a PA system so that the hearings impaired have minimal trouble understanding what is said.
4. It has been noticed at Jamestown, one community member found advertising inadequate. More frequent communications required with some workers.
5. More information about the types of new scooters, and their details i.e. price, battery life, suspension, weight load, attachments for frames, different terrain ability, and the availability of how and where to purchase or hire a scooter would be beneficial for future sessions.

## Attachments

- A: Gopher Muster Flier
- B: Pre- Muster Questionnaire
- C: Post - Muster Questionnaire
- D: Evaluation Questionnaire for facilitators and retailers etc.
- E: Timetable of muster
- F: Electric Wheel Chair and Scooter Information Brochure
- G: Occupational Therapy Presentation Information

# Attachment A

Are you covered and eligible?

Come and find out more at the

**GOPHER MUSTER**

***INFORMATION ON:***

- Scooter Safe Use*
- Road Safety Regulations*
- Legal and Insurance Issues*
- Practical Demonstrations*
- Scooter Equipment Display**



FOR THE USER / DRIVERS, FAMILIES AND PEOPLE ALSO INTERESTED IN OWNING A SCOOTER TO GET AROUND THE TOWN.

Day:

**WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 03**

Time:

**9AM**

**TO 11AM**

Location:

Laura Hospital's Activity Room

Day:

**TUESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> MAY 03**

Time:

10 AM TO 12NOON

Location:

Jamestown RSL Hall

Day:

**WEDNESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> MAY 03**

Time:

9AM TO 11AM

Location:

Gladstone Senior Citizen Hall

COME ALONG AND BRING YOUR GOPHER/SCOOTER IF YOU CAN.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ANNETTE OR ANNABEL ON 8663 3100.

SUPPORTED BY TRANSPORT SA, ROCKY RIVER HEALTH SERVICE  
AND THE NORTHERN AREAS COUNCIL COMMUNITY ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

# Attachment B



# **GOPHER MUSTER**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE PRE-MUSTER**

**Please tick one box only.**

1. What is the maximum speed of a gopher on the footpath?

5km per hour     10km per hour     20km per hour

2. Am I covered for “Third Party Bodily Injury Insurance” automatically?

Yes                       No                       Unsure

3. Do I need a licence to drive a Gopher?

Yes                       No                       Unsure

4. How many people are allowed on a gopher?

1                       2                       3

5. Do I need my doctors OK, to drive a gopher?

Yes                       No                       Unsure

# Attachment C

**GOPHER MUSTER**  
**EVALUATION POST MUSTER**

1. What will you do with the information you have learned from the Gopher Muster?

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2. What could have been improved?

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3. What other information would you like in future?

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4. Do you feel more confident driving your gopher?

Yes             No             Unsure

5. Would you be assessed for safety next time you are looking at a gopher?

Yes             No             Unsure

6. When crossing the road or turning the corner do you check for traffic and give way?

Yes             No             Unsure

Thankyou for your comments

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# Attachment D

## **GOPHER MUSTER**

FEEDBACK / EVALUATION FOR PRESENTERS & PROFESSIONAL

**Eg Occupational Therapist, SA Police, Outreach Nurses, Retailers, etc**

1. What did you feel that worked best about the “Gopher Muster”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did you feel did not work very well, at the “Muster”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Was the time span of this exercise suitable?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How could this be changed to improve this activity?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How relevant was the content / information of the “Gopher Muster”? (Please circle)

Very relevant

Relevant

Not very relevant

Any comments.

6. How do you feel the scooter drivers and families benefited from the “Gopher Muster”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Do you have any comments regarding your response?

# Attachment E

## Gopher Muster Program Time Table

	<b>FACILITATORS</b>	<b>INFORMATION TO COVER</b>
<b>30 minutes</b> (9 AM - 9:30 AM)	ANNETTE &ANNABEL	Arrival and registration i.e.: name, address, age etc. Questionnaire pre muster
<b>30 minutes</b> (9:30 AM - 10 AM)	SHANNON OT PPRHS	Safety features of gophers - Safe driving tips - Practical on road assessment - Information on insurance & eligibility criteria
<b>15 minutes</b> (10 AM - 10:15 AM)	SHANNON OT PPRHS	Practical Extra Time (if required) Question time
<b>15 minutes</b> (10:15 AM - 10:30 AM)	DALE OATES SA POLICE	Road rules - Licences, speed, alcohol, give way rules etc. -Speed gun demo of 10km/hr
<b>15 minutes</b> (10:30 AM – 10.45 AM)	DALE OATES SA POLICE	Question time
<b>15 minutes</b> (10:45 AM – 11 AM)	Scooter City Home Help Equipment	Display discussion  Evaluation
<b>CLOSE</b>		

# Attachment F



# MOTORISED WHEELCHAIRS & SCOOTERS



## Information Brochure

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Northern Area Council Community Road Safety Initiative

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## Where can I get Information ?

### In Mid North Region:

Scooter City - Port Pirie 8632 2505

Transport SA - Information Help line - 13 10 84

- General Enquires 1300 360 067

Occupational Therapy Dept at Port Pirie Regional Health Service Inc. - 86384 4693

Or contact outreach staff at your local hospital / health service.

### Adelaide

There are a number of suppliers based in Adelaide, you can seek independent advice about the options available

Independent Living Centre - Freecall: 1800 800 523

Home Help Equipment - Ph: 8244 5900

## Funded & Supported by



Supported by:

Northern Area Council Community Road Safety Group

Rocky River Health Service Inc.

SA Police

Port Pirie Regional Health Service Inc. - Community and Allied  
Health Service Division

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Adapted from the Occupational Therapy Department - Port Pirie Regional Health Service  
Brochure Dec 2002

Produced by the Northern Area Community Road Safety Committee , May 2003

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## What do I need to consider ?

Scooters can be a great way of traveling short distances as they are relatively easy to maneuver and use. However, they are expensive to purchase and maintain.

1. Where do you aim to use the scooter?
2. Are the surfaces smooth or rough?
3. How far do you aim to travel?
4. Are there footpaths, ramps and pedestrian crossings?
5. How do you maintain the scooter?
6. Where will you keep the scooter at home, in a safe, dry place?

## What are the essential Criteria?

- ? Adequate vision to safely maneuver the scooter
- ? Ability to concentrate for a period of time
- ? Ability to sit unsupported
- ? Ability to turn head and or shoulders to see behind you
- ? Ability to walk short distances
- ? Adequate hearing to enable you to be aware of surroundings.  
e.g. approaching cars or pedestrians.
- ? Doctors authorization to use a scooter
- ? Ability to get in and out of chair independently.

## DISADVANTAGES

Expensive to purchase and maintain

Ongoing maintenance of tyres, brakes, batteries etc

Only a short term solution if you suffer from a deteriorating condition

Unable to access some shops - need to leave scooter outside

Need to meet essential physical and cognitive criteria

Extremely limited funding available for domiciliary provided scooters.  
Only high priority cases will be considered.

## Advantages

A convenient and easy way of travelling short distances

Increase independence

Able to travel on the footpath

## Road rules

Scooter users:

You do not need a licence to purchase or drive a scooter but it is strongly recommended that you seek a medical with your doctor and an assessment is completed by an occupational therapist to ensure your safety on the road.

Registration is not required yet

You must use a footpath when one is available. Scooters on footpaths are classed as pedestrians and must follow the road rules for pedestrians. eg give way to traffic when crossing the road.

Speed limit on footpaths is not to exceed more than 10km per hour

On roads scooter users must obey all road rules like other vehicles e.g. drink and drive....., must use headlights and tails light if driving at night, must keep to the left on the road.

Scooters have a load capacity therefore check with manufactures or retailer

Strongly recommended to install a "bicycle flag", place reflector tape on the rear, wear bright coloured clothing and turn your lights on.

**REMEMBER: BE SEEN - BE SAFE**

## insurance

Third Party Bodily Insurance is automatically provided at no cost by Motor Accident Commission - SGIC for scooter users.

Third Party Insurance and Comprehensive Insurance is strongly recommended to be obtained for Scooter users. Contact Registration and Licensing on 131084 or your insurance provider.



# Attachment G

# **SCOOTER MUSTER PRESENTATION**

**Things to consider when thinking about scooters:**

**Identify your main purpose for wanting a mobility scooter.**

Is it to replace your motor vehicle, now that you no longer have a licence?

*If so, consider that:*

- A scooter is legally not a motor vehicle, but a pedestrian and therefore required to travel on the footpath, if available.
- You are unable to travel the same distance that your motor vehicle could, due to the scooter being battery charged.
- You will not travel as fast as your motor vehicle.
- You are required to have a level of capability (physical, visual, cognitive, etc.) to use a scooter safely and independently, which you may no longer have.

Is it instead of an electric wheelchair, which carries a community perception with it?

*If so, consider that:*

- To drive a mobility scooter independently and safely you are required to be able to walk short distances. E.g. You have the ability to walk from your house to your garage.
- To ensure you continue to use the mobility scooter safely, it is advised that you have regular examinations by your GP and occupational therapist.
- If you have a deteriorating condition you may be looking at having to purchase a wheelchair in the future.

Is it to be used for longer distances that you are no longer able to walk?

*If so, consider that:*

- Your community needs to be suitable for a mobility scooter, therefore having footpaths and ramps to access the road or pedestrian crossings.
- You should have regular examinations to ensure your continued safety.

When looking at using a mobility scooter you need to consider the following:

- Where is the mobility scooter going to be used? For example; in suburban streets or on a rural property.
- Are you going to need it to be transported, by public or private transportation?
- Will it be your primary mode of transport and if so is that realistic? Therefore you may also require public transport, so you need to consider if the mobility scooter will be able to access this.

- How far would like to travel on the mobility scooter?
- Will it be used mainly outside, inside or a combination of both?
- Is the environment mainly flat, or hilly, smooth or rough?
- Also look to see if your environment is suited to a mobility scooter, are there ramps, pedestrian crossings and footpaths available?

The answers to these questions will help to determine the best mobility scooter for you, your needs and your environment.

#### Capabilities:

To ensure that you are using a mobility scooter safely and independently it is recommended that you have the following characteristics.

- The ability to hear traffic, sirens, and other pedestrians.
- The ability to see adequately, allowing you to see oncoming traffic, the other side of the road and signs within the community.
- The ability to maintain balance while travelling.
- The ability to get on and off of the mobility scooter.
- The ability to turn your head and / or shoulder to see both sides and behind yourself when reversing and turning.
- The strength in your arms and shoulders to steer the mobility scooter over a long period of time.
- The hand and arm strength to operate the seat, controls and tiller.
- The ability to release controls quickly, or to turn the tiller while using the controls.
- The ability to make decisions quickly or within adequate time to protect yourself or others from harm or unexpected events.
- The ability to distinguish between colours and objects.
- The mental capacity to carry out problem solving activities. Therefore you are able to determine a safe route if faced with some road works or work being done on the footpath.
- The ability to travel in a safe manner and without reacting to situations dangerously.
- The ability to remain focused, without loss of memory or direction.

It is suggested that on a regular basis, for example once a year, you have a physical examination to ensure you are still physically able to manoeuvre a mobility scooter safely and independently. This includes having your eyesight, hearing and strength checked.

#### How to go about getting a scooter?

If you want to purchase your own scooter it is not necessary for you too have an

assessment by an occupational therapist.

It is however recommended that you do, as the occupational therapist can advise you on the features of different scooters and what might best suit your needs. Occupational therapists have networks with equipment providers and can access a range of information about different types of scooters.

The occupational therapist can also provide you with scooter driving training so that you feel more confident when using your scooter.

If you wish to apply for funding for a scooter through domiciliary care or other funding bodies you are required to complete a medical assessment form and be assessed by the occupational therapist.

#### What does the assessment involve?

- You will need to have a form completed by your GP detailing any medical conditions you experience that might impact on your ability to drive or learn to drive a scooter. Following this, the assessment with the occupational therapist involves discussing your need for a scooter, e.g. when you will use and for what purpose.
- Other influencing factors include your level of social supports, access to other forms of transport and physical ability to access other forms of transport.
- If a scooter is decided to be the best option for you, you will undergo an off road test with the OT. This involves looking at your vision, hearing, memory, movement and balance and cognitive skills (thinking skills).
- If this part of the assessment goes well, you will have a trial at driving a scooter supervised by the occupational therapist. The therapist will give you basic training and then assess your ability to drive or learn to drive the scooter. You may be asked to do such things as driving through your town, crossing roads etc.
- If it is safe for you to use a scooter, the occupational therapist can apply for funding for a scooter for you to use. If you are successful in obtaining funding, you will either be issued with a new scooter or one from an existing pool. It is important to remember that the scooter does not actually belong to you and thus it is returned to the pool when if your needs change and you no longer require it. This also means that if you are found to be driving unsafely your scooter can be removed from you until you demonstrate that you are able to drive in a safe manner.

#### Alternatives to scooters:



Utilise support from family, friends and neighbours.

Public transport – is there a community bus or a volunteer service that you could access for transport?

Shopping – will the store deliver to your home?

If your mobility is impaired it may be worthwhile to trial another type of mobility aid such as a walking stick or a walker. These can improve people's independence greatly as the person will feel much safer walking with the support of an aid. Mobility aids can be hired or purchased. Speak to your outreach nurse if you are interested in hearing more.

#### Safe driving tips:

##### **When using your mobility scooter always expect the unexpected:**

- Be alert and look around while crossing the road.
- Watch out for cars turning into or reversing out of driveways. A flag can help people see you passing.
- Do not assume that drivers will give way to you.

##### **Make yourself be seen:**

- Wear light or bright coloured clothes, but not loose clothing.
- Display a small yellow or orange flag on the scooter
- Cross the road in an open area, where you are able to see the traffic and the traffic is able to see you. Therefore do not cross the road from behind obstacles such as parked cars or trees.

##### **Always plan your trip:**

- *Before leaving home consider:*
  - Where you wish to go, and how you will get there.
  - The time of day that you will be travelling at, a large portion of pedestrian accidents occur during peak hour.
- *When you are travelling consider:*
  - If ramps seem to direct you into the line of traffic, you may find it safer to go around the corner to find two driveways that are parallel to cross at.

- Where will you cross a road, to be sure that you can cross within a short period of time? Therefore ensure that you look at the other side of the road before you start to cross, to make sure that the ramps or driveways are parallel.
- If something unexpected is on your route, e.g. Road works, stop and look around at the best possible solution before rushing into the situation.
- Always observe the path in front of you and watch for uneven surfaces and obstructions.

### **Loads:**

Most mobility scooters have a carry basket, some are at the front of the mobility scooter, while others are at the back. It is important to be aware of the total load that the mobility scooter is able to carry, excessive loads can cause the mobility scooter to become unstable or work harder than expected.

Ensure that all loads are positioned on the mobility scooter in a way so that the weight is evenly distributed over the mobility scooter. This will help to avoid the mobility scooter becoming unstable.

Remember that the mobility scooter also has to carry its battery, motor, and you, all of which are generally placed at the back of the mobility scooter, so centralise the weight by placing loads at the front of the mobility scooter. Although, excessive loads in the front of the mobility scooter can affect the user's steering.

### **Night Use:**

If you are using your mobility scooter at night you are required to have a number of lights fitted:

- A white light at the front
- A red light at the rear
- And red reflectors at the rear are also recommended.

If your mobility scooter is not fitted with lights it is recommended that it is not used at night.

### **Ramps and Hills:**

- Always travel up and down ramps or inclines as straight as possible; never attempt to use a ramp at an angle, as the mobility scooter may become unstable.
- Ensure that you are all the way up or down a ramp before turning.
- Do not drive across a sloped surface greater than 3 degrees
- Do not attempt to climb a hill greater than 10 degrees

- Do not reverse when travelling up or down a hill
- Do not attempt to turn when travelling up a hill, but if unavoidable select a slow speed and a wide turning circle.
- Do not get on or off of your mobility scooter when on a hill.

**Other safe use recommendations:**

- Ensure that the key is turned off and taken out, prior to getting on or off the mobility scooter, so that if you accidentally knock the controls the mobility scooter will not move.
- Keep your feet on the footpads when the mobility scooter is in motion.
- Before moving ensure that your seat is locked into position.
- When travelling in congested areas, travel at the slowest pace possible to ensure you do not have an accident with someone or something.
- Do not weave erratically or make sharp turns, these can cause the scooter to become unstable.

**Tipping the mobility scooter:**

- Usually if the mobility scooter tips over it is caused through user error
- To prevent this the user needs to ensure that they drive the mobility scooter within its capabilities.

Always ensure the battery is charged prior to heading out on your journey. If the battery shows less than half power, it is advisable to charge further before driving.

Insurance information:

When you first receive your scooter the Motor Accident Commission provides you with Third party Bodily Injury Insurance free of charge. This means you are covered if you accidentally injure someone whilst on your scooter. However you are not covered if you injure yourself or property belonging to yourself or someone else.

If you have an accident where you are seen to be more than 25% responsible you are required to pay an excess of \$300.

If you purchase your scooter privately it is recommended that you contact your insurance agency to discuss your insurance requirements for cover of fire, theft and property damage.

You are not covered if

- You are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol
- You are carrying passengers
- You are carrying a load in excess of what the mobility scooter is able to carry
- The mobility scooter is unsafe or damaged

Contents insurance

- Provides cover for your mobility scooter in case of theft
- It is not covered if the mobility scooter is stolen due to the key being left in.