

# Scooters will make bike lanes relevant

**Paul Nicolaou**



**B**uilding a regulatory framework to control the legal use of e-scooters in Sydney might be one of the toughest assignments the Minns government has faced.

Balancing realistic regulations while embracing the benefits of new technology will be tricky.

Unfortunately, Sydney's experience with share bikes isn't encouraging. No amount of penalties stopped them being dumped in our streets.

So, why would the experience with e-scooters be any different?

A parliamentary committee is examining the issue but perhaps it's time for Premier Chris Minns, Transport Minister Jo Haylen and Roads Minister John Graham to "phone a friend".

The friend being NSW Productivity Commissioner Peter Achterstraat, who has

already conducted a wide-ranging review of e-scooter use.

It's also timely with 450,000 e-scooters already owned in NSW.

Mr Achterstraat points out that bicycles and cars were once demonised. He brings realism and commonsense to the question of how personal mobility devices – e-bikes and e-scooters – are used.

Here's the reality check. Most riders won't be travelling long distances or long commutes.

More likely are short rides to the shops, the train station or bus stop as part of a longer public transport commute.

Tourists might use share bikes or scooters to explore our wonderful city more deeply, and that's a good thing.

So, have we blown many millions of dollars on seldom used CBD bike lanes while forcing motor vehicles into traffic snarled narrow corridors?

Probably yes, and the question then becomes how to get people to actually use the bike lanes so they don't become expensive white elephants.

More people need to be living in the CBD if bike lanes are to be popular. Not even 30,000 people live in Sydney's central zone.

We have a chance to increase the CBD population, enhance vibrancy in the city and put the bike lanes to work.

Business Sydney is all for innovative transport options but common sense is needed to get the regulatory framework right.

Any regulations need to safely accommodate all road users and be capable of enforcement without putting undue demand on a police force that needs to concentrate on fighting crime.

**Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney**