

External assessment 2025

Stimulus book

Philosophy & Reason

General instruction

- Work in this book will not be marked.

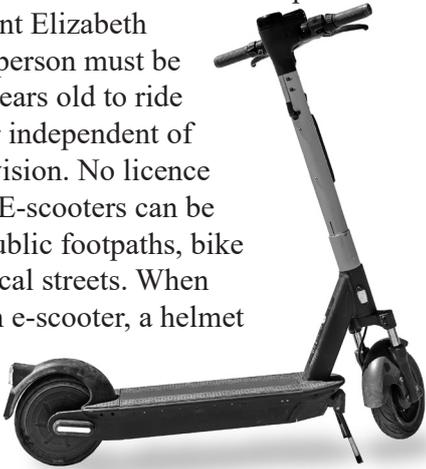
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Context statement

Elizabeth is a fictional Australian state. It operates as a liberal parliamentary democracy, similar to other Australian states.

Stimulus 1

Electric scooters (e-scooters) are an economical form of motorised transport. Under current Elizabeth state law, a person must be at least 16 years old to ride an e-scooter independent of adult supervision. No licence is required. E-scooters can be ridden on public footpaths, bike lanes and local streets. When operating an e-scooter, a helmet must be worn and speed limits observed.



Stimulus 2

Progress Party proposal to ban e-scooter use, 5 March 2025

If the Progress Party is elected to government in Elizabeth, we will pass a law to ban the use of electric scooters in our state. In recent years, a substantial number of riders have sustained serious injuries by falling off or otherwise crashing their scooters. This has placed additional strain on already stretched public hospital emergency departments and caused additional expense to the taxpayers who fund our health and welfare systems. A ban is justified because the risk of riders seriously injuring themselves with e-scooters is simply too high. Sometimes, people need help to help themselves.

Stimulus 3

Post to Libertarians Online discussion board by member LB, 6 March 2025

Government already imposes speed limits on e-scooter riders for public safety. Additionally, the law stipulates that one must be at least 16 years old to ride an e-scooter, ensuring that those who choose to ride are sufficiently mature to understand the risks involved. To go beyond these restrictions and ban the use of e-scooters to protect would-be riders is paternalistic in the extreme. As John Stuart Mill correctly argued, it is not the rightful role of government to restrict individuals' freedom to make decisions about aspects of their lives that only concern themselves. This is a bedrock liberal principle, and it's not surprising that societies that continue to abide by it are among those that enjoy the highest standards of living globally.

The Progress Party argues that banning e-scooters is justified, given the health and welfare costs e-scooter accidents impose on both the individual and the broader community. What they forget is that such an expense is the price to be paid in any society that recognises the greater benefit gained from allowing broad personal freedoms. In this respect, riding an e-scooter is little different from other relatively high-risk activities that individuals undertake and society tolerates despite the public health costs incurred, such as playing contact sport.

Both fulfilment for the individual and utility to society are maximised by allowing people the freedom to engage in their own 'experiments of living', as Mill phrased it. A law that prohibits grown-ups from being able to enjoy riding an e-scooter is simply the imposition of one group's perception of the good upon another — a classic example of Mill's 'tyranny of the majority'. Should the Progress Party's proposed law come into effect, Elizabeth would be well on the road to becoming a nanny state, with an authoritarian, paternalistic government.

References

Stimulus 1

Image of scooter adapted from Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scooter_el%C3%A9ctrico_-_A740010.jpg. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (CC BY 4.0).

Stimulus 3

John Stuart Mill – from *On Liberty* (1859)
<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/34901/pg34901-images.html>



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