

## **The Experience of Being a Motorised Mobility Scooter User - Research by Ryan Formiatti**

Ryan Formiatti is a graduate occupational therapist from Edith Cowan University. Ryan's honours research project was entitled 'The experience of being a motorised mobility scooter user' and was a collaborative research project with supervisors Lois Moir, Janet Richmond and Jeannine Millstead. The research was a qualitative investigation exploring the individual experiences of being a scooter user and the ways in which scooters impact the individual's community and social engagement, daily activities and maintenance of mobility.

The main themes established were knowledge, engagement and environments. Knowledge related to an overall lack of pre-purchase information, trialling of scooters, awareness of ergonomic design issues and consideration for individual's current health and functional level. This resulted in uninformed purchases and some dissatisfaction with the devices. Also all interviewees expressed different charging behaviours in relation to their batteries, with no participants able to state how far a fully charged battery is expected to go, limiting full scooter use potential.

The scooter was primarily used for shopping and other activities included attending appointments, 'joy' rides and visiting family and friends, thus facilitating community participation and engagement in valued roles. The scooter was further linked to maintaining social interactions as it was a conversation starter and allowed maintenance of personal and social relationships.

The environment theme was divided into discrimination and barriers. Discrimination was experienced in two different ways, through public stigma due to visibility of a disability and the individual's age and also a lack of universal design in village planning. Barriers faced in the built environment were small or narrow spaces, uneven footpaths, steep gradients and overgrown grass on pathways.

The research emphasised the need for pre-purchase assessments to match the device to the individual's skill level, along with recommendation to access adequate trialling of scooters. Changing of scooter design would facilitate better outcomes for the user by decreasing discomfort when it is in use. In addition visible battery life indicators would empower users' to ride scooters further distances while feeling confident and safe. Environmental changes are needed to allow inclusion of all community members and to decrease discrimination experienced by some users'.