

Private e-scooters OK

KIERAN ROONEY

MORE electric scooters are set to hit Victorian roads, with the state government extending its trial and opening it up to private scooters and younger riders.

Roads Minister Melissa Horne will on Thursday announce a six-month extension of the state's e-scooter pilot, which last year allowed companies Lime and Neuron to provide hire scooters on city streets.

Since then more than 3.7m trips have been taken in Melbourne and the state has now moved to expand the amount of riders and the places they can travel.

Expect younger riders, higher speeds

Privately-owned e-scooters are now included in the trial and the age limit for riders has been lowered from 18 to 16.

Riders can also use roads with a speed limit of 60km/h or less, up from the 50km/h limit currently in place.

The changes will come to effect on April 5.

"We know e-scooters are popular with many Victorians – so we're extending the trial in Victoria under these strict regulations to ensure people travel responsibly and safely," Ms Horne said.

"Riders should always wear

a helmet, stick to the speed limit, only ride on roads under 60km/h – and never ride on the footpath or with another person."

There are about 2500 hire scooters available across the Melbourne, Port Phillip and Yarra council areas.

Privately-owned scooters are available for sale at stores across Victoria but until now their use on the state's roads has been illegal.

Riders must follow the same alcohol and drug restricts as motorists and are allowed to use bicycle lanes but not ped-

estrian footpaths. They cannot travel about 20km/h and any scooter that can go faster than 25km/h is not covered by the trial and considered illegal.

The government estimates about 400 tonnes of carbon have been saved through e-scooter trips, with data showing riders largely use them for leisure, social events or commuting.

They are also available in Ballarat and more than 200,000 trips have been taken since they were introduced.

Despite their popularity, the rollout of e-scooters has pre-

sented new challenges for police and road users.

Earlier this year, the Herald Sun revealed there were 252 crashes involving e-scooters between December 1, 2021 and November 30, 2022.

Over the same time police issued 827 infringements, with people most commonly fined for not wearing helmets and riding on footpaths.

Peak body Victoria Walks has warned that underage use is common among school kids even though it can attract a fine of \$185.

The Andrews government



will spend the next six months on further research into better standards for product safety, changes to fines and educating riders.

An oversight panel is expected to make recommendations about the future of the scooters once the pilot program is finished.

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Tones and I surprises students at Tintern Grammar with a debut of her new single and clip in which student Coby Ashman (in glasses) stars. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

KIMBERLEY SEEDY
NUI TE KOHA

A RINGWOOD student who stars in the video for Tones and I's latest song has been brought to tears after the pop star paid a surprise visit to his school.

Tintern Grammar year 6 student Coby Ashman, 11, plays the singer's younger brother in the video for her new single, I Am Free. The singer visited the Ringwood East school on Wednesday, treating students to hits Dance Monkey and Fly Away.

She then gifted her stylish pink glasses to budding actor Coby.

It comes as the singer, born Toni Watson, revealed she was rescued by lifesavers on her wedding day in Bali. She wed Jimmy Bedford in a secret ceremony there this month.

"Overwhelmed" by the impending nuptials, Watson said she had sought solace in the water on the morning of her wedding.

"My good friend Jack Mack ... even though he can't swim, was swimming out in a kayak. So I ran over to him and jumped in the kayak ... and said, 'Let's just go sit in the ocean for a bit in the kayak, where no one can reach us,'" Watson said on Fox FM's Fifi, Fev and Nick breakfast show.

"Then the kayak started sinking, fully sank to the bottom, and the lifesavers had to come out, dive down and get the kayak back up to shore."

Accused say they're not corrupt Harry taught to 'never complain'

FIVE people accused by the anti-corruption watchdog of major misconduct within Victoria's public transport network will contest their charges in a bid to clear their names.

The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) charged seven people in December as a result of an investigation into "serious corrupt conduct" relating to a cleaning tender given to a business named Transclean.

During IBAC hearings, it was alleged Transclean made secret cash payments to senior transport officials to ensure it kept winning multimillion-dollar contracts.

Transclean boss George Haritos, co-director Alex Kyritsis, manager Maria Tsakopoulos, employee Steven Kyritsis and lawyer Steven Collin fronted the Melbourne Magistrates' Court on Wednesday to hear they will have a

two-week committal hearing from December 11.

Barrister Philip Dunn, representing Mr Haritos, said his client would argue there were no "undue favours" granted to Transclean.

V/Line chief executive James Pinder and Metro manager Peter Bollas – who have both been sacked after the IBAC investigation – also fronted court on Wednesday and will be back on May 8.

PRINCE Harry accused the royal family of keeping him in the dark over phone hacking so he didn't "open a can of worms", saying in sensational testimony to London's High Court that he had been conditioned to "never complain, never explain".

The witness statement blaming senior figures in the monarchy for withholding information came as Prince Harry's privacy lawsuit was

dealt a major blow; with key evidence revealed as "leaked" in violation of privacy orders of a confidential judicial inquiry.

The Duke of Sussex said in the written comments, released at the end of the second day of the hearing, that he was brought up to accept the family rule of dignified silence, but he couldn't remain quiet after "racist" attacks against Meghan Markle.

"Following the death of my

mother in 1997 when I was 12 years old and her treatment at the hands of the press, I have always had an uneasy relationship with the press," he said. "However, as a member of the Institution the policy was to 'never complain, never explain'."

"There was no alternative; I was conditioned to accept it. For the most part, I accepted the interest in my performing my public functions."