

People buy mobility scooters for a variety of reasons, Quite often for reasons of sheer luxury. Firing up a ton and a half of big, steel motor car, finding a park for it, driving it home again, all for a bottle of milk and a loaf of bread can be too much trouble for some.

Hopping on a reliable scooter and using Canberra's footpath system instead can be convenient and social. Scooters are quiet and versatile. They can be equipped with shopping bags, baskets and walker carriers. Some have a range exceeding 40km per overnight charge. Most have automatic braking systems, variable speed controls, lights and indicators. Generally speaking, the bigger the wheels, the smoother the ride, and top end scooters available today also have independent suspension.

In some cases small wheels can be an advantage. Small wheeled scooters that fold up and fit in the car boot are ideal where the operator is looking for better shopping range, or to keep up with friends and family, or to take away on holidays or to events, reducing the obligation of others. Boot lifters are also available for those who have difficulty lifting even light weight appliances. They operate on the cars 12 volt system and fold down into the boot for traveling.

Almost all scooters have a simple control system operated by thumbs or fingers. Two paddles, one for forward, one for reverse, also control speed and braking. Steered by a simple tiller system, many have articulated seats with lift up adjustable arm rests and swivel 360 degrees when necessary with adjustable back recline.

Scooters were developed as a mobility aid, not a replacement for exercise. They will get you to the shop and back, or to a function, but should not become a reason not to walk at all if you can. Use the supermarket shopping trolley as a walker when you get there.

Electric wheelchairs have come a long way too. Now available in mid wheel drive format, they turn on the spot and are ideal for use in an unmodified home. With similar articulated seats to scooters they are comfortable and efficient, have excellent range and easily turn out of hallways into bathrooms and bedrooms without a ding.

Instead of having paddles for speed and a tiller for steering, they generally use a joystick system. Point the joystick where you want to go and control your speed and brakes all with one simple joystick. Lift up arm rests allow the operator to sit at a table or to transfer to other seating or bed. The old style rear wheel drive chairs were often too long to accomplish tight turns in enclosed areas.

If ever there was a good time to be older, this has to be it. Computer processors and modern deep cycle gel cell batteries molded into steel frames with great new plastics have made getting around a breeze. Individual independence can re invigorate family and social relationships as your reliance on others is mitigated.

The NRMA and the Council of the Ageing have produced a very helpful booklet on scooter safety titled the "Scooter Safe User guide". Copies are available free from The

Wheelchair Factory, The NRMA or COTA. Given at least annual servicing , your scooter or other appliance should give years of convenient , reliable enjoyment and freedom... And no petrol bills. But remember.... ALWAYS buy locally for reliable servicing.