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Darwin hopes e-scooters will boost economy

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City of Darwin believes a smart scooter trial will bring economic benefits.

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City of Darwin Council hopes the rollout of smart e-scooters will help people get around in the heat while providing a tidy boost to the local economy.

The council has green-lit a 12-month trial using around 300 Neuron Mobility scooters in 37 locations across the city. They will use bikeways, shared paths and footpaths.

After the trial, which could begin as early as August, the council will welcome expressions of interest from other operators for a permanent rollout.

Josh Sattler, general manager for innovation, growth and development for the City of Darwin, says he's "over the moon" about the plan.

"It's really exciting for us. We have beautiful green spaces but it's so hard to get around because it's quite hot. Motorised scooters are a great option for both locals and tourists, providing a quick, effortless and inexpensive mode of transport to move around the city."



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The rollout follows similar scooter sharing schemes in Adelaide and Brisbane, but Mr Sattler claims Neuron's scooters, from southeast Asia, have "a lot more bells and whistles" than the green scooters brought to Brisbane by Californian tech start-up Lime.

Data gathering

Neuron Mobility scooters are already used in Singapore, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Cyberjaya and Kuala Lumpur, but Darwin will be the first market globally to use Neuron Mobility's new commercial grade N3 e-scooter, which the company claims are built strong to ensure smooth and safe rides.



The N3s are smart scooters that will access a lot of data from users' profiles – where they're going, what time of day they're travelling and what shops they're driving past. The move may cause privacy concerns among locals, but Mr Sattler wants users to focus on the improved travel experience and the huge benefits of collating that information for local businesses.

He expects the scooters to be an economic boon for the city.

"You're scooting past a place instead of driving, so you can just pull up, park the scooter and go and look at those shoes you've been eyeing up for three days," he says. "This has got some great economic outcomes for our CBD and our suburbs as a whole."

The trial requires no funding from the City of Darwin; the user will pay for the scheme – at a rate of \$0.15 per minute, although weekly and monthly passes will also be available.

The user will simply hire their scooter using an app, which will give them details of where to find it, a secure code to activate it, information on where they can ride and locations of geo-fenced parking points.

The N3 scooters can travel at a maximum speed of 20km/hr. Even so, Neuron staff on the ground will apply infringement on the back of misuse, which could include a lockout period. The scooters will also be removed at a certain time of the evening.

Responsible use

Mr Sattler has faith locals and tourists will use the scooters responsibly.

"We're fundamentally empowering the user to take responsibility for the scooter because while the wheels are turning, you're being charged."

His main concern is whether there will be enough scooters for everyone.

"The cruise terminal welcomes 4,000 visitors every three or four days so it's whether we're going to have enough scooters in the city for them to all get that experience.

"But that's why it's a trial. Twelve months from now, we should be able to get it right."

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