

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 15 September

Shared e-scooters are not as 'green' as they seem

Shared e-scooters may not be the environmentally friendly, low-carbon transport solution they are often portrayed as.

Environmental consultant and Australian Managing Director of EHS Support, Chris Smitt, warned that it was dangerous for policymakers to accept manufacturers' sustainability claims without first considering the e-scooter's complete life cycle, its durability and the type of transport it replaced.

"Zero tailpipe emissions are not the same as zero environmental impact," Mr Smitt said. "If an e-scooter genuinely replaces a car journey, there can be an environmental benefit. But if it replaces walking or a trip on existing public transport, we may simply be adding another environmental burden."

Using published Brisbane City Council e-scooter trip data, Mr Smitt's analysis, to be presented today to a conference of environmental scientists, found an average shared e-scooter trip was less than 2 kilometres and took around 11 minutes. Compared with walking the same distance, the e-scooter saved the user an average of only around 7 and a half minutes. He said that where these short trips replace walking or journeys on existing public transport rather than private-car travel, the additional mining, manufacturing, operational and waste impacts may outweigh the environmental benefit. Mr Smitt said this is a particular concern for dumped e-scooters.

"In 2025 and across the Melbourne City Council, the Herald Sun reported 75% of all e-scooters were dumped in non-publicly accessible spots. This is further supported by data from the community reporting app Snap Send Solve, which shows that abandoned e-scooters in Victoria nearly doubled in 2025. Nationwide, the numbers are even more striking, with e-scooter dumping reports increasing by 99% over the past year".

"The environmental performance of a shared e-scooter is highly sensitive to its service life and total use. Frequent replacement, repair and collection can substantially erode the benefit that might otherwise be achieved by replacing car travel. In some cases, their overall environmental footprint can end up being similar to a car."

Discarded e-scooters could also become a source of environmental contamination. Plastic helmets end up in landfill and batteries left in waterways can leach heavy metals including copper, lithium, nickel and cobalt, reaching levels toxic to aquatic ecosystems if rapid recovery is not undertaken.

Mr Smitt said governments that allowed shared e-scooter schemes needed stronger reporting and accountability around e-scooter durability, use, recovery and waste management.

"If we want these programs in our cities, we need much greater accountability and a more holistic assessment of their environmental impacts," Mr Smitt said.

Mr Smitt will present his analysis at the CleanUp 2026 conference in Adelaide today.

crcCARE is hosting CleanUp 2026 in Adelaide from 13 – 17 September. crcCARE is a partnership of organisations dedicated to developing new ways to deal with and prevent contamination of soil, water and air.

The conference program is available [here](#).

Media enquires

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Presentation: Environmental consequential life cycle assessment of dockless e-scooters, 4.25pm, Tuesday 15 (City Room 3, Adelaide Convention Centre)

Media: Complimentary, free media passes are available for any accredited media personnel who wish to attend the conference in person.