



Plug in phone – and scooter

By TANYA FARBER

● When Andy Le May gets home from work, he doesn't just plug in his cellphone, he also plugs in his electric scooter.

Le May, who also sells eco-friendly scooters, told African Utility Week delegates in Cape Town this week that the two-wheelers trumped electric cars because they were cheap to run and were a solution to traffic congestion.

The electric car and scooter market is only 1% of the South African market, partly because of the high cost. But Wynand Goosen, founder of wattEV2buy RSA, told delegates that by 2020 consumers would pay "more or less the same amount you'd pay for a normal vehicle".

In Western markets, electric cars cost more than \$30 000 (about R380 000), but the East is pointing the way to the future.

Carrot and stick

"In China, the situation is completely the opposite. You are spoilt for choice for electric vehicles below \$20 000 even before government incentives have been factored in," said Goosen.

"The situation shows that government support has sparked the industry in China and from this year onwards they are moving from a 'carrot' model of reward to a 'stick' model of punishment."

What does it mean for emerging countries like South Africa? Goosen said the electric vehicle industry required "road infrastructure and charging stations, and these come at a huge cost".

Whether or not South Africa invests in those, the country has to deal with the congestion caused by urbanisation.



Lumka Nofemele has made the switch to electric wheels. Picture: EWIZZ

Maletlabo Handel, national project coordinator at the UN Industrial Development Organisation, said the world's urban population would triple over the coming decades, and with that would come an even higher rate of motorisation.

Greenhouse gases

Types of mobility "need to change with that trend", she said. More than half of the world's oil output is used in transport, with private vehicles responsible for the biggest share. In South Africa, 90% of greenhouse gases are from transport.

"In South Africa we have challenges to overcome. Our spatial history and development is such that we are not able to

offer mobility that is efficient and sustainable. We need to integrate and connect transport systems," said Handel.

"We need to create awareness, put infrastructure in place and make sure we have a framework that promotes green road transport in our cities."

Khanyiselo Kumalo, an energy analyst at GreenCape South Africa, said there were many opportunities in the electric vehicle market.

"These are in manufacturing, to secondary markets, to developing the infrastructure for charging," she said. "The need to recycle the batteries isn't immediate, but we need to be ready for it and that is also an opportunity."