



The Bicycle, *a great way to commute*



Many tens of thousands of people commute to work every day in Australia. Bicycle travel offers a great alternative to the car, especially for short trips or combined with a bus or train trip. Talking to people who choose to commute by bicycle highlights a diversity of motivation factors and benefits.

Why do many people ride their bike to work or University?

Firstly, people just love riding their bikes! It is an enjoyable way to get around. There are few activities we learn so early in life that continue to provide benefits and enjoyment to people whether they are 5, 35, 65 or even beyond 85. Let's look at some of the more tangible benefits.

The benefits of commuting by bicycle

Better health and fitness:

- fit your daily exercise into a commute and have more time available for other things,
- use your commute for training if you are a competitive cyclist,
- it's a great low impact exercise and a fat buster, Sports Dieticians Australia categorises cycling as a 'high kilojoule burning exercise' at 42kj/min¹,
- will help you sleep better,
- assist manage blood pressure and strengthen your heart,
- The Queensland government has put together a comprehensive, referenced guide on the health, environmental, social, transport and economic [benefits of cycling](#):

Reduced stress:

- riding home after a hard day at the office is a great way to unwind,
- physical activity in general helps reduce stress levels,
- gain personal time to relax and reflect on the day while riding to and from work.

Saves money

- leave your car at home and save on petrol, tolls, parking and gym fees.

Performance on the job

- bicycle commuters say they arrive at work ready for the day and maintain better energy levels while they are there
- employers have discovered that staff who ride to work have lower levels of absenteeism and higher productivity (great incentive and cost benefits for investing in end of trip facilities)
- cycling employees will also generally have lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression and will be less likely to be involved in an accident at work. (RTA brochure "Cycling to work, works!"²).

Save time

- Bike lanes and cycle ways mean there are more ways than ever to avoid getting stuck in traffic jams on the way to work,
- fit your daily exercise into a commute and have more time available for other things.

Commitment to improving our environment and reducing pollution

- cars produce pollutants of air, ground and water,
- burning fossil fuels creates CO₂, a major greenhouse gas, save a non-renewable resource,
- cars also generate noise pollution.

Increasing cycling commuting saves on spending on new parking & vehicle infrastructure by employers, government, and local councils.



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How do I start?

Most states have well established 'Ride to Work' programs, with comprehensive support provided for both those wishing to commute and employers wishing to create a cycle-friendly workplace. The bicycle user groups in your State or local area should be able to provide you with the information you need to get started.

Safety equipment: all cyclists are required to wear an approved helmet by law, your bike must have a warning device (bell or horn), and a red rear reflector. If riding after sunset and before dawn you must also have clearly visible front & rear lights. Effective brakes are also mandatory. Your visibility is also enhanced by wearing bright coloured clothing and reflective devices after dark. A properly maintained bike is important in allowing you to enjoy cycling in a safe manner and you should always ask your local bike shop to carry out a service if you are not able to do it yourself.

Road rules: Remember that a bicycle is classed as a vehicle under the Aust Road Rules and you must obey all rules while riding on the road. There are also some rules that apply specifically to bicycles. The websites of most departments of transport have a section on the road rules for bicycles and you should make sure you are familiar with them. Check out the links below.

Riding skills: In addition remember that your level of skill while riding will greatly enhance your safety on the road. If you feel that your skills need some improvement, talk to the bicycle group in your state or Cycling Australia (www.cycling.org.au) to find a skills training course to suit you.

Riding in traffic: Always wear a helmet. Ride in a predictable manner at all times, signal your turns and ensure you are able to avoid road hazards by scanning ahead of yourself to anticipate the movements you will need to make. Practice scanning to your rear to locate any approaching traffic.

Plan your route before you start to find roads that have sealed shoulders, less traffic, or use cycle paths to get there. Maps are usually available at your bike shop or local government shop front. The resources we have found for you below contain maps and route information.

Ask your employer about facilities for secure parking for your bike, lockers and changing facilities, as well as other benefits they may offer. Look through the list of resources below and visit some of the websites for more information.

State-by-state info on commuting:

National information:

- For a comprehensive fact sheet on cycling in your State - go to the fact sheets link on the Cycling Central website.
- The [Cycling Promotion Fund](#) promotes cycling for all Australians.
- The [Bicycle Federation of Australia](#) is Australia's national bicycle advocacy organisation for recreation, transportation and health.
- Cycling Australia, www.cycling.org.au, conducts a range of training activities and cycling competition nationally through local clubs.

Australian Capital Territory:

- [Pedal Power ACT](#) has a Ride to Work web page.
- the ACT Dept of Urban Services provide [cycling resources](#) and a comprehensive [road rules handbook](#).

New South Wales:

- the [Bicycle NSW website](#).
- the RTA website for [information on commuting](#).

Northern Territory

- the [NT Cycling Association](#).
- the [NT Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment](#).

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Queensland:

- The [Bicycle Queensland](#) website.
- the QLD government has a comprehensive [cycling website](#).

South Australia:

- The Bicycle Institute of SA has a [commuter page](#)
- The SA Transport Dept bike site has maps and info for [commuters](#)

Tasmania:

- Bicycle Tasmania has a [booklet](#) on all aspects of commuting
- The Tasmanian Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources has a [cycling website](#)

Victoria:

- Go to the Bicycle Victoria website at <http://www.bv.com.au/> and enter “ride to work” in the search function for great resources.
- Vic Roads [website for cyclists](#) includes a great cycling map facility.

West Australia:

- [The Bicycle Transportation Alliance](#) has a range of information available on its website.
- The WA Dept of Planning & Infrastructure [cycling site](#) outlines its innovative cycling promotion programs and comprehensive resources.



References:

1. <http://www.activeforlife.com.au/exercise.asp?page=main/exercise/burning+fat>
2. http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/trafficinformation/downloads/cycle_to_workemployer.pdf

This information has been collated by the Cycling Promotion Fund (03-9818 5400, www.cyclingpromotion.com).

Disclaimer: Every attempt has been made to ensure details were accurate at the time of printing; however, things can change quickly and we urge you to check the validity of the information yourself.