



# Canberra cycling facts

**Increasing commuting by bicycle is ACT Government Policy.** The Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT has a target of increasing bicycle trips as a percentage of work trips from 2.3% in 2001 to 5.0% in 2011<sup>1</sup>. It contains eight targeted actions for cycling.

An estimated **80,000 Canberrans cycle annually**<sup>2</sup>.

A cordon count around Civic and Acton showed a **16% increase in the numbers of people cycling** between 2004 and 2006<sup>3</sup>.

For the past seven years, more **new bicycles have been sold in Australia than cars**<sup>4</sup>. Over 60% of the bicycles sold were adult bicycles<sup>5</sup>.

**At least 40% of car trips in Canberra are likely to be less than 5 kilometres long** – a distance that can easily be cycled<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, **many car trips that contribute to traffic congestion could be replaced by bicycle trips**.

The potential benefits of cycling are greatest closest to town centres, eg **78% of Canberra's population lives within 5 kilometres of a town centre**<sup>7</sup>. Making it easier for these people to cycle would reduce traffic congestion and the need for car parking spots.

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<sup>1</sup> ACT Planning and Land Authority (2004) *The Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT*

<sup>2</sup> Australian Sports Commission (2005) *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport* estimates that 44,000 people over 15 years old cycle, and Pedal Power estimates that 80% of ACT children between 5 and 15 years cycle. From <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3235.8.55.001>.

<sup>3</sup> Pedal Power ACT (2006) *Cycling Cordon Count: Canberra City and Action, 2004-2006*. See [www.pedalpower.org.au/advocacy](http://www.pedalpower.org.au/advocacy)

<sup>4</sup> Number of vehicles sold from VFACTS data. Number of bicycles sold from Australian Customs data

<sup>5</sup> Bicycle Industries Australia, (2006) *Bicycle Industry Report 2006*.

<sup>6</sup> The research firm Socialdata amalgamated surveys of Perth local government areas to create an overall Perth figure - 32% of car trips were less than 3 km long and 48% were less than 5 km. Even in Joondalup, an outer metropolitan area, 38% of car trips were still less than 5 km. Socialdata Australia (2000), *Potential Analysis "Perth"* including Appendix – Joondalup. Even in the sprawling metropolitan areas of the United States, 49% of all trips are shorter than 3 miles (4.8 km), 40% are shorter than 2 miles (3.2 km), and 28% are shorter than one mile (1.6 km). From U.S. Department of Transportation, *1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation: Public Use Data Files*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Highway Administration, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> ACT Chief Minister's Department (2004) *Population Projections for Canberra Suburbs*

## **Cycling is a whole of government solution that makes Canberra attractive to both residents and visitors.**

- **Cycling improves mental and physical health.** More than 60% of Australian adults are overweight<sup>8</sup> and thus at higher risk of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. Physical activity, like cycling, has been described as the best buy in public health. If people are to exercise, it's important that it's easy to do. The exercise benefit of cycling can be gained by simply cycling to the shops, work or school. Unlike, say, going to the gym, cycling does not require putting aside special time.
- **Cycling reduces traffic congestion.**
- **Cycling reduces the need for car parking spaces.** 10 bicycles can be stored in 1 car space<sup>9</sup>.
- **Cycling is sustainable.** Global warming threatens all Australian communities. Replacing car trips with bike trips reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Cycling helps save on petrol.**
- **Cycling is community friendly.** Suburbs where more people cycle and walk are attractive.
- **Cycling is economical.** The NRMA estimates that even a small car costs \$113 a week to run<sup>10</sup>.

**The health benefits of cycling are significant.** The British Medical Association found that "even in the current hostile environment, the benefits from regular cycling are likely to outweigh the loss of life through cycle accidents"<sup>11</sup>. Another UK study found that, while about 140 people are killed each year while cycling, around 20 000 others die prematurely due to a lack of exercise. The study estimated that regular cycling provides a net benefit to personal health that outweighs its risk of injury by a factor of 20 to 1<sup>12</sup>.

**Greater cyclist numbers mean lower bicycle accident rates.** Drivers adjust their behaviour to account for cyclists as cyclists become an accepted part of the road environment<sup>13</sup>.

### **Politicians underestimate support for sustainable transport.**

Research firm, Socialdata surveyed European countries and found 85% of citizens prefer policies that encourage environmentally friendly transport

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<sup>8</sup> Dunstan D, Zimmet P, Welborn T, et al. (2002) The Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study (AusDiab) — methods and response rates. *Diabetes Res Clin Pract* 2002, 57: 119-129.

<sup>9</sup> Bicycle Victoria (2004) *The Bicycle Parking Handbook*.

<sup>10</sup> NRMA (2006) *Private Motoring Costs Schedule*.

<sup>11</sup> British Medical Association (1991), *Cycling towards health and safety*.

<sup>12</sup> Hillman, M. (1993), Cycling and the Promotion of Health, *Policy Studies* 14: 49-58.

<sup>13</sup> D Robinson (2005) Safety in Numbers in Australia: More Walkers and Bicyclists, Safer Walking and Bicycling, *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* 16(1), 47-51, and P L Jacobsen (2003), Safety in Numbers: More Walkers and Bicyclists, Safer Walking and Bicycling. *British Medical Journal* 9, 205-9.

(eg walking, cycling, public transport) and only 15% prefer policies that encourage car transport. However, decision makers perceive that citizens preferences are totally different. They perceive citizens prefer environmental modes only 41% to 59%, as opposed to the actual 85% to 15%<sup>14</sup>. The Warren Centre in Sydney made a similar finding of Sydney residents. Though the divergence is not as marked, 70% of people still had a preference for their money to be spent on public transport etc rather than roads<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> See page 19 of <http://www.socialdata.de/info/Switching%20to%20Public%20Transport.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> See page 2 of [http://www.warren.usyd.edu.au/transport/Community%20Values\\_Exec.pdf](http://www.warren.usyd.edu.au/transport/Community%20Values_Exec.pdf)