



Making Canberra into Australia's best cycling and walking city



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Summary

The recently released Sustainable Transport Plan sets goals for increasing cycling and walking. Pedal Power believes we can do better than simply increasing walking and cycling and that we can make Canberra into Australia's best cycling and walking city for recreation, transport and fun. Canberra already has a large shared path network, a dry climate, many green spaces for pleasant walking and cycling and a population that regularly cycles and walks.

Although Pedal Power's main interest is cycling, the benefits of increased cycling and walking are similar and many policies which increase cycling will also increase walking. For this reason, although our policies target cycling, we believe they can easily be complemented by policies for walking to make Canberra into Australia's best cycling and walking city. There is big potential to increase cycling and walking because an estimated 35-40% of car trips in Canberra are for less than five kilometres – a distance that can be easily cycled. An estimated 10% of car trips are less than 1 kilometre in length – an easy distance for many people to walk.

Pedal Power has compiled eleven policies that will make Canberra into Australia's best cycling and walking city. They are:

1. An in-principle commitment to give priority to walking and cycling
2. An Office of Cycling and Walking
3. A four-year \$8 million capital works program to build Australia's best cycling and walking city
4. \$3 million per annum for maintaining shared paths and footpaths
5. Continued support for TravelSmart programs
6. Include cycle lanes on all new and refurbished arterial and collector roads, and when resealing, paint cycle lanes on all existing arterial and collector roads
7. 50 km/h speed limits for all neighbourhood and shopping streets
8. Mandatory end-of-trip cycling facilities in new buildings
9. Make pedestrian crossings safer
10. Implement "keep left on shared paths" signage on all paths
11. Funding for a Monaro Rail Trail

Background

Cycling is already part of the Canberra community. According to the ACT Government almost 40 per cent of Canberrans, or 125,000 people including children, cycle at least once a fortnight¹.

The ACT Government's Sustainable Transport Plan recognises the benefits of cycling and walking and sets goals of increasing both.

Sustainable Transport Plan: Percentage of journey to work trips by

	2001	2011	2021
Walking	4.1%	6%	7%
Cycling	2.3%	5%	7%

Achieving these goals would dramatically increase the amount of cycling and walking. *They are realistic goals because we estimate that around 35-40% of car trips in Canberra are for less than 5 kilometres (a distance that can be easily cycled and a distance over which cycling trip times are comparable to driving times).*² It is also estimated that around 10% of car trips are for less than 1 kilometre.

Why cycling and walking?

The ACT Sustainable Transport Plan aims to increase cycling and walking because it recognises the big benefits of active transport. These benefits are:

- **Health.** More than 50% of Australian adults are overweight³ and thus at higher risk of heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. Childhood obesity is increasing. Physical activity, like cycling, has been described as the best buy in public health. It protects against heart disease by limiting obesity and reduces the

¹ ACT Government's *Canberra Bicycle 2000 Strategy* (1997).

² In Sydney the NSW Department of Planning has estimated 33% of car trips are less than 3 kilometres and 55% are for less than 5 kilometres. The research firm, Socialdata, amalgamated surveys of local government areas to create an overall 'Perth' figure and found that 9% of car-as-driver trips were for less than 1 km, 32% were less than 3km and 48% were for less than 5km. Even in Joondalup, an outer metropolitan area, 38% of car-as-driver trips were still less than 5km. The 1997 Canberra Queanbeyan Travel Survey found that 22% of *all* trips are for less than 3 kilometres and 55% of trips are for less than 8 kilometres. However there are questions about the accuracy of this data.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4802.0 National Nutrition Survey: Selected Highlights, Australia, (1995).

onset of diabetes. 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.

- **Transport Efficiency.** Cycling reduces road congestion and the need for car parks.
- **Cycling is community friendly.** Suburbs where there is more cycling and walking feel more alive.
- **Environment.** Cycling ties in with the ACT Government's Greenhouse Strategy, reduces our dependence on oil and does not cause noise pollution.
- **Economics.** Estimates suggest the cost savings to society of substituting bicycle trips for car trips are high – 60c/km⁴. Canberra's shared paths also have significant tourist potential.
- **Fun, cheap transport.** Cycling is a cheap transport option available to almost everyone. Cycling is fun!

⁴ Australian Government, *Australia Cycling: The National Strategy* (1999).