

Cyclists commute faster than drivers

On Thursday 27 September, the 2007 Commuter Challenge showed that commuters from Dickson or Gungahlin can get to Civic faster if they travel by bicycle.

Harry Brown and Squadron Leader James Badgery left Baker's Delight Gungahlin together at 8 am, bound for Civic.

Harry normally commutes by bike, but for this event he left his bike behind and drove a car. James meanwhile was riding the Air Force's latest tactical weapon – a bicycle.

According to the NRMA Travel Planner, Harry in his car could do the 12.5 km trip in 15 ½ minutes by car, at an average speed of 48 km/h. Harry was soon in the lead, with lighter traffic than he expected, and traffic lights seeming to work in his favour. By the time he got to the traffic lights at the corner of Northbourne and Wakefield Avenues, outside the ABC studio, he was confident that he was well ahead.

James knew he had the odds stacked against him even before Harry overtook him. But he also knew he would have an advantage in the congested traffic close to the city. He couldn't afford to lose any time if he was to make use of that advantage. Down Gungahlin Drive, with a slight tailwind, he was touching 50 km/h.

When James got to Wakefield Avenue he looked across and waved at Harry. From there, down the freely-moving Northbourne Avenue bike lane, it went all his way. He arrived at the Pedal Power Office in the Griffin Centre after only twenty minutes. James on his bike had averaged almost 40 km/h. It was another six minutes before Harry found a park for his car and arrived at the Griffin Centre. Harry had averaged 30 km/h.

Meanwhile a second group left Baker's Delight in Dickson at 8.15 am, also bound for the Griffin Centre.

First away was Sherryl Greathead, who secretly admitted she would rather be cycling. Before she reached her car, she was overtaken by a group of cyclists.

Andrew Peters, on his mountain bike, took off like a scalded cat in the direction of the Northbourne Avenue bike lane. In the run down Northbourne he had only a couple of small traffic light delays. After passing Haig Park he turned off into Braddon's Lonsdale Street, to avoid several sets of traffic lights. At the final traffic lights on Cooyong Street he lost valuable seconds, but he still managed to complete the 4.2 km in 11 minutes – an average speed of 23 km/h.

Rachel Muntz, on a recumbent, and Karl Nissen, on a hybrid, took the scenic 5 km Dickson Bike Path, along Sullivan's Creek. They arrived together five minutes after Andrew, having averaged almost 20 km/h.

Sherryl drove past just after Rachel and Karl arrived, but it was another ten minutes before she had found a car park and walked back to the Griffin Centre. By the time she arrived, her average speed for the journey was a dismal 10 km/h.

Before going on their separate ways to work, the whole group sat down to enjoy the fruit twists donated by Baker's Delight Dickson, washed down with cappuccino and hot chocolate.