



Australian Cyclists Party Cycling Policy for the 2016 Federal Election

Our policy approach has as its main objective of significantly increasing participation and to deliver not only a cycling-friendly nation but also to improve many aspects of everyday living for all Australians and for the environment we live in.

Removing barriers to more people cycling is a key component of the approach and it is one that the Commonwealth has a major role to play – both at policy and funding levels. Cycling is ready to mature beyond being viewed as a sport or for recreation and the Commonwealth Government must play its part in facilitating that change.

We embrace as a framework Bicycle Network's comprehensive ["A Nation of Bike Riders – Federal Election Policy Paper 2016"](#) – with one significant change (described below). The paper specifically sets out three Commonwealth actions for increasing cycling participation:

1. *Commit to a Bike Fund – The Australian Cyclists Party believes the fund should be at least \$480 million, or \$20 per person – not the paper's \$10 per person*
2. *Build for Bikes by providing safe cycling infrastructure with all transport projects*
3. *Get Aussies Active by funding a national preventative health program that targets physical activity, particularly in young people*

In addition, with transport greenhouse gas emissions continuing to grow and already contributing to nearly 20% of the nation's total, we believe the government is compelled to act to increase cycling as a short trip solution to help address its own stated aims of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions by 26-28% by 2030 over 2005 levels.

These key action areas emphasize and enable the Australian Cyclists Party's policy themes:

- *Road Safety*
- *Infrastructure*
- *Education*
- *Health of people and environment*

Cycling offers one of the best means for the government to begin tackling many of its most pressing challenges – transport, road congestion and funding; rapidly rising health costs; and the need to dramatically and cost-effectively reduce emissions from all sources.

Increased cycling participation is not only a goal in itself but it provides an efficient and quickly delivered means to addressing a number of the nation's most significant challenges.

Commit to a Bike Fund

Bicycle Network recommends a Bike Fund of \$240 million – just over doubling the current national spend. The Australian Cyclists Party believes this figure is too low to deliver the

“The bicycle is a simple solution to some of the world's most complicated problems”

kind of investment to significantly improve the many obstacles to more frequent non-sport bicycle riding in Australia today. Our recommendation is for the fund to be at least \$20 per person or \$480 million.

According to the Heart Foundation: “More than 70% of people would support the increase of Government funding to help fund infrastructure for cycling, walking and public transport. If cycling infrastructure was improved, more than one in two people reported that it would either encourage them to start cycling or it they would increase their current level of cycling.”

\$20 per person compares to over \$700 per person currently being spent on roads and would be the equivalent of less than one kilometre of freeway construction. Even at \$20 per person it is also only a third of what the Netherlands spends – after having already established extensive cycling networks. In the UK, The Cross-Parliamentary Committee on Cycling and Walking recently recommended a government expenditure of £10 rising to £20 (A\$19 -> \$38) to increase participation.

Build for Bikes

Whereas new roads construction can seldom find cost justification, according to a government study from Western Australia, “Economic, social, health and environmental benefits for the community (of cycling infrastructure is) between 3.4 and 5.4 times the costs incurred.”

Changing course does not necessitate the creation of new departments or funding mechanisms. The Commonwealth has already created funding avenues that can all be targeted with specific allocations to be set aside or diverted to improving cycling and pedestrian facilities – or to have these included in new projects. These include:

- \$229 million in a National Highway Upgrade program;
- \$200 million for the Black Spot program
- \$350 million for the Roads to Recovery program
- \$300 million Bridge Renewal program
- \$2.9 billion for key roads across Australia

The Commonwealth today itself contributes over \$5.5 billion in grants for infrastructure supplementing state contributions of \$13.8 billion. By the government’s own reports, and that of the Grattan Institute, we are overspending on new road builds by OECD standards and, “Australia can now only fully fund roads by cutting other items.” Already over 22% of the costs of roads are covered by general tax revenues.

Another hidden cost of our over-dependence on motorised transport is the enormous cost to Australia – estimated at \$27 billion per annum – equivalent to over 50% of the nation’s health budget.

With overall road usage now flattening out, it would be logical that our building of roads for car usage should taper and be diverted to more productive and efficient means of transport and infrastructure.

Get Aussies Active

Over 63% of Australians are overweight or obese – among the highest rate in the world and still rising. It is known that obesity leads to other complications, including diabetes and is associated with heart disease and other serious health impacts. Type 2 diabetes is fast

becoming a huge cost burden to the health system with each person incurring costs of between \$4k and \$9k per year to manage their condition. The trend is on a steep increase and a consistent factor beyond diet is the lack of exercise by many Australians. According to the health statistics, 35% of Australians are not active enough.

Cycling is not the only answer to obesity, diabetes or cardiovascular disease but it can be part of the solution by encouraging an easy way for young and old alike to include daily exercise for at least some of the short trips that they take every day. The health impacts may go further with associated community engagement and mental health benefits.

Nowhere is the trend to more sedentary living and car-centric transport becoming more evident than with young people who rank among the lowest in the OECD for active travel. Studies have concluded that only 25-32% of young people use active travel as a normal way to get to and from school even though 90% of households have at least one working kid's bike. The studies go on to point to both perceived and physical hindrances by schools and parents to greater uptake. Schools must be enlisted to work to help turn the tide.

Our concern also extends to women who are significantly under-represented on the roads – accounting for just 25% of cycling commuters. Studies have shown that insufficient infrastructure is a major obstacle and their numbers increase when facilities and perceived safety are improved.

We also believe that it is time for Australia to remove penalties for not wearing a helmet. We advocate for a significantly large-scale pilot program to be supported where the positive effects of increased ridership can be weighed against any increased negative risks. Evidence tendered to date at state and national inquiries indicate support for this approach. Nations that enjoy the highest participation rates do not require helmet use and also enjoy low injury rates for cyclists.

To address the issues of inactivity will take more than studies and advertising awareness programs – it will mean removing the perceived safety risks from inadequate cycling infrastructure and motorist behaviours. Insufficient infrastructure keeps 40% of would-be cyclists from doing so, especially for daily transport needs.

Reducing GHG

Australia is the largest *per person* contributor to greenhouse gases in the world today. It is also the largest emitter on a per GDP level. According to The Climate Change Performance Index, Australian ranks next to worst at #60. With the evidence of and concern for the damaging results of global warming mounting, and few options to reduce vehicle emissions substantially over the next decade, government must look for cost-effective solutions.

As motor vehicle emissions contribute over 25% to the total, and most of that is from cars, alternative transport including cycling must be looked at to play its part. When compared with other investment options, the return on investment for building better infrastructure to get more people cycling is compelling.

We believe that targeted programs at increasing cycling use for more trips would provide significant returns should be included in the Commonwealth's Direct Action Plan and funds made available under its Emission Reduction Fund.

Whether it is for our health, the economic health of the nation or of the environment, cycling can deliver to Australia and Australians improved well-being, spur economic growth and help the nation to do its part to combat global warming. The barriers are well understood. We think it is time the Commonwealth invested in overcoming them.

To learn more about our strategy and party values please visit: www.icycleivote.com or download this paper: [Our Policy Approach – download the pdf](#)

A resource guide to the facts and figures quoted here and in our policy formulation is available on request at <mailto:media@icycleivote.com>