

**BICYCLE
NETWORK®**

Premiers Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council Submission

October 2020



1. More people riding is better for the economy, people's lives

Thank you for the opportunity to make a further submission to PESRAC about the “new ideas, new ways of doing things, new ways of working” to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 on Tasmania’s economy and society.

Bicycle Network made an initial submission when PESRAC was first established, highlighting what other countries were doing to make it easier to ride and walk as they opened up from COVID-19 lockdowns. These temporary bike lanes and wider footpaths were important in many cities as people avoided public transport and to ensure social distancing of 1.5 metres.

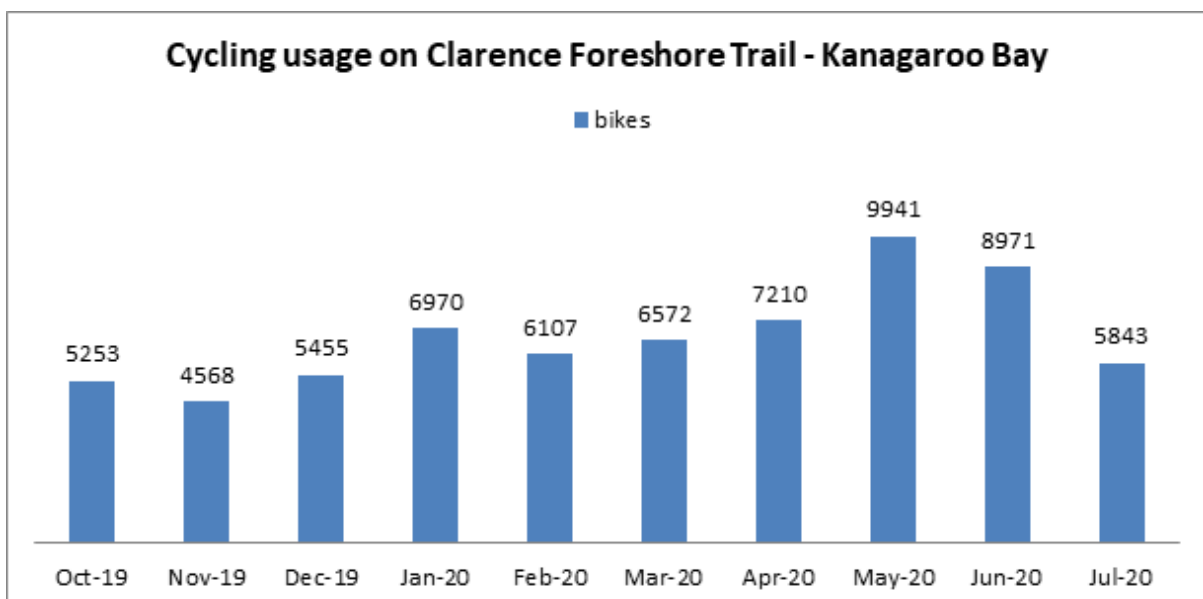
Sydney has responded in similar ways, rolling out temporary separated lanes and Melbourne and Brisbane are fast-tracking already planned separated networks.

While Tasmanian cities have not provided temporary cycleways/footpaths, in other cities that have some are already planning to make them permanent to improve the capacity of streets to move more people, increase footfall for businesses and make streets more attractive for people to be enticed back to city centres.

As we move into COVID-normal life, we know money will be tight for many Tasmanians, there may be greater levels of stress and anxiety as a result of uncertainty and unemployment, and further outbreaks of COVID-19 may restrict movement and social connections.

Making it easier to ride a bicycle for transport can help some Tasmanians adapt to these changes and also sets the state up for a more sustainable transport future.

We also know that since the outbreak of COVID-19 local bike shops are reporting unprecedented sales and repair work, so more Tasmanians now have access to working bikes. More people are also using bicycles for recreational riding. Clarence Council’s Foreshore Trail counter at Kangaroo Bay has recorded substantial increases in bicycle movements since March this year:



2. Reducing the cost of transport



With more unemployment and underemployment as a result of COVID-19 shutdowns, money will be tight in a lot of households, as it always has been for some Tasmanians.

Transport can cost Tasmanians a significant portion of their income. In 2019, the RACT estimated that to buy a small Kia car the cost over five years of paying back a car loan, insurance, registration, servicing, fuel and other costs would be \$108 per week. Medium sized cars and SUVs cost more than \$200 per week.¹

Bus travel for someone who has to cross two zones costs around \$40 per week for five days of return trips and for a concession card holder about \$20, and a student/child \$15.

Many trips in our urban areas are within rideable distances, especially if we increase the availability of electric bicycles. In Hobart² the average trip distance is just 10.8 km and in Launceston³ 75% of commuters live less than 10 km from their workplace. A person of average fitness on a pushbike could ride 10 km at a moderate pace in about 30 minutes or less, on an e-bike it could take as little as 20 minutes and less fit people would be capable of making the trip.

For young people, who are least likely to be able to afford a car and often work in part-time and casual jobs at night and on weekends that may not be covered by bus timetables, providing separated cycleways could help them secure and hold employment. Also, women are generally more concerned about personal safety and less likely to walk or catch buses at night. Providing them with separated cycleways gives them a transport option that may feel safer than bus or pedestrian travel.

¹ www.ract.com.au/en/cars-and-driving/related-articles/vehicle-operating-costs-2019

²

www.transport.tas.gov.au/roads_and_traffic_management/about_state_roads/plansstrategies/small_tiles/greaterhobarthouseholdtravelsurvey

³ <https://greaterlauncestontransportvision.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Greater-Launceston-Transport-Vision.pdf>

Giving people the option of not having to have a car or being able to share cars in a household would help cut transport costs. If the Australian and Tasmanian governments funded separated cycleways to major urban centres, schools and other services then more people would have the option of riding a bicycle.

US research⁴ that has been echoed in Australia found that the majority of the population are open to the idea of riding for transport but lack of safety on the roads holds them back. Cities and towns that build “all abilities” cycleways that are comfortable for people aged 8 to 80 to ride on see big increases in the number of people riding for transport.

Helping people onto e-bikes has even greater potential to get more people riding. E-bikes flatten hills, reduce sweating, and make longer journeys easier and cost very little to run. Other countries and cities have come up with a variety of schemes to get people onto e-bikes because they provide a viable alternative to cars, but the upfront costs can put some people off.

Possible incentives include:

- Interest free loans to buy an e-bike, similar to the recent TEELS scheme for energy efficiency appliances.
- Offering salary sacrificing of e-bikes, which is now possible through companies E-Stralian and Apex Salary Packaging.
- Direct subsidies for people to buy e-bikes – these could be targeted to people on lower incomes.

State and local governments could also encourage a commercial shared e-bike provider to establish in Tasmanian cities, such as Uber’s Jump bikes.



⁴ <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/158497>

3. Extending public transport's reach

Tasmania's public transport network could be much more effective with better integration of bicycle travel with buses and potentially ferries. By allowing people to take their bicycles on board a bus or ferry and/or offering secure bicycle parking on high frequency routes, we could expand the reach of public transport and help people save money and be more active.

Tasmania's low housing density makes it expensive to provide a frequent, efficient public transport system.

Metro's Turn up and Go routes, which have frequent services, is a good model to build on. By providing buses with racks on the outside or inside and/or secure, well-lit bicycle parking hubs along these routes, people may be more inclined to ride to a high frequency route rather than the stop which is closest but doesn't have as many services. In this way these routes would operate more like trains do in other cities, where people ride to the train station and lock their bikes in secure cages/lockers or take their bikes aboard the train.

In many North American cities, and in Canberra, buses are equipped with racks on the front or back of the vehicle and in some places can be rolled on and stored inside the bus. Luckily Tasmania's low-floor buses are made on the island and so can have bike racks added or be retrofitted with the sort of interior bike storage used in other countries to encourage active transport:



The borders, Scotland⁵



Seattle, US⁶



Lisbon, Portugal⁷

4. Improving physical and mental health outcomes

While we hear a lot about “whole of government” approaches, there is not a lot of incentive for ministers or departments to work across portfolios.

Improving physical activity rates of the population is a case in point. Physical inactivity is causing heart disease, diabetes and some cancers but our towns, suburbs and cities are too often designed to encourage people to sit in cars rather than walk and ride.

On top of the benefits for physical health, getting regular exercise can help people manage stress, anger and depression.⁸ Getting back on a bike is a gentle, easy way for people to re-

⁵ <https://www.bordersbuses.co.uk/bike-friendly-buses>

⁶ <http://communitytransit.blogspot.com/2016/05/biking-and-busing-its-easy.html>

⁷ <https://euroveloportugal.com/en/public-transport-connections/transport-network-in-lisbon>

⁸ AD Okely et al, *A Systematic Review to update the Australian Physical Activity Guidelines for Children and Young People*. Report prepared for the Australian Government Department of Health, June 2012.

engage with exercise and ramp it up according to their mood and abilities. For someone struggling with mental health problems that make exercise seem impossible, riding a bike can be an achievable gateway.

By walking and riding for most trips under 10 km we can incorporate moderate activity into daily routines so they are more likely to be maintained. By helping people to get the activity they need to stay healthy, we reduce the pressure on our health system by removing some cases of preventable diseases.

But the funding for the infrastructure that supports better health outcomes doesn't come from the health department and the infrastructure department does not measure itself against health outcomes, even though transport choices can have a big impact on physical activity levels.

The government should include health outcomes as a rationale for investment in active transport infrastructure and riding support programs, and measure the success by the numbers of people riding as well as the ages and gender of riders. Women, older people and young people are less likely to ride on roads because of safety concerns, so increases in the numbers of these riders show that the correct infrastructure is being built.



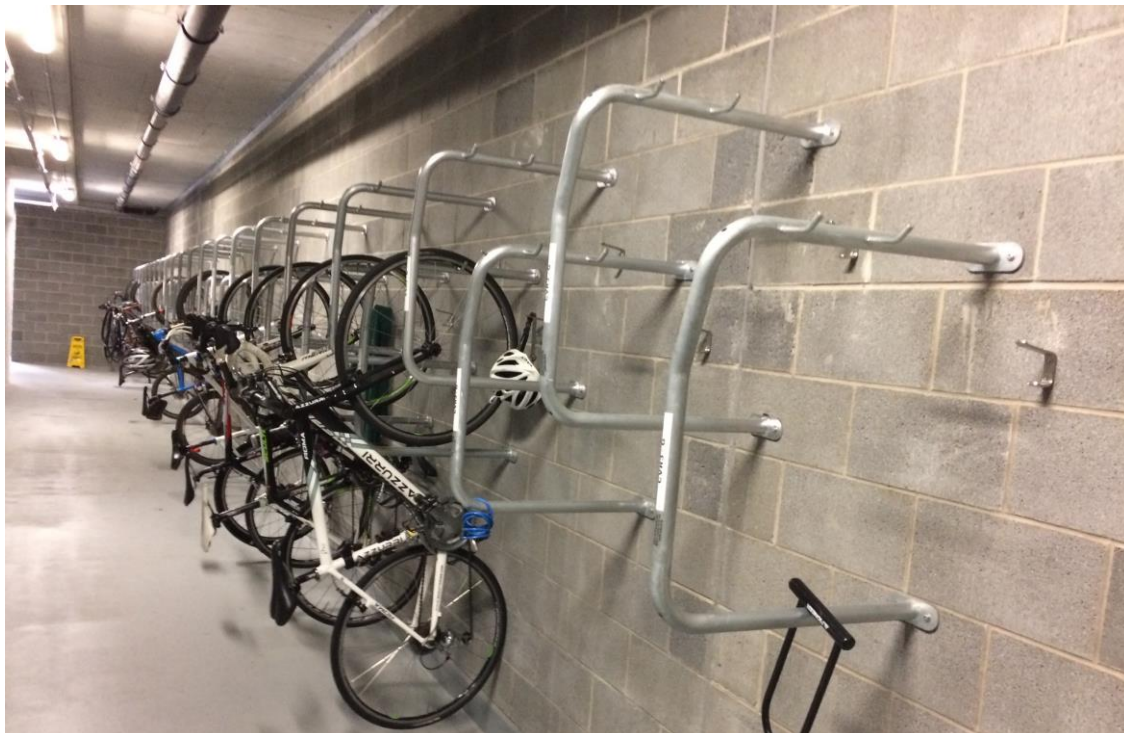
5. Reducing traffic congestion

Traffic congestion costs businesses money from freight being held up, staff stuck in traffic, customers turned off visiting, or deliveries being delayed.

By providing more carrots to regular commuters to ride it frees up the roads for people who need to drive for work or because of physical disability, and more efficient ways of moving people, like buses.

- **Encouraging people to ride**
E-bikes have been shown in other cities to get people out of cars and cargo e-bikes to reduce delivery van traffic. Many other governments have introduced incentives to help people buy e-bikes, from direct subsidies to interest-free loans and salary sacrificing.
- **Government infrastructure funding**
State and federal government funding is directed at road construction and public transport with some ad hoc investment in paths and cycling on roads, but most walking and cycling infrastructure is left to cash-strapped local councils. There needs to be a standing state government funding commitment to building all abilities cycling infrastructure, like there is for roads and public transport. The UN recommends that 20% of transport budgets should go to “active transport”. Ideally the federal government would contribute to such a fund, or have its own.
- **No roadmap for riding**
The UK has recognized the benefits for its economy and society of more people riding and introduced design requirements to get the infrastructure needed. We don’t have anything like this in Tasmania, with state and local governments coming up with their own designs based on broad guidance from the national AustRoads body. The Tasmanian Government should introduce a cycling design guide to standardize and improve cycleways to “all abilities” ratings.

6. Changing planning laws





Changes that will not cost as much money but will influence our built environment over time are to require all new developments to include separated cycleways that connect to existing or planned public cycleways, new commercial buildings to include end-of-trip facilities and new apartments to have dedicated parking for bicycle transport.

New residential developments are being built without cycleways inside them or without consideration of connection to existing or planned regional cycle paths. All new developments should have all abilities cycling as a transport option and councils should ensure they are reserving land for connection to urban and regional paths.

End-of-trip facilities include undercover, secure bike parking with electricity charging, showers, lockers and change rooms. By ensuring these are in commercial buildings, more employees will have the option of riding to work. The government could help cement the change by only leasing office space in buildings with adequate end-of-trip facilities.

Multi-storey apartment buildings don't have any requirement for minimum bicycle parking, despite many being built in inner city areas where bicycle transport should be an obvious choice. Secure, undercover bicycle parking should be available for every apartment at ground-level close to the entrance of the building or its car park so that riding is an easy option.

Where the government could spend money is helping existing building owners to retrofit end-of-trip facilities or building public facilities in the centre of our cities to cater to staff of and visitors to smaller businesses that don't have the space for their own facilities.

7. Helping tourism bounce back





Bicycle tourism helps contribute to local economies while also providing facilities that locals can use.

Mountain bike tourism has already shown its positive effects on the local economies of the towns of Derby and Maydena, and other projects are set to improve tracks near Hobart, St Helens and George Town.

Adding more family-oriented and retiree cycling activities such as rail trails and coastal paths would expand Tasmania's offering and cater to a broader range of tourists.

The North-East Rail Trail is the sort of project that doesn't require a lot of upfront investment for an asset that will be used by visitors and locals alike all day, most days of the year. The North West Coastal Pathway when completed will deliver the potential for a multi-day ride from Latrobe to Wynyard, opening up opportunities for towns, producers and artists while giving locals safe, separated routes.

A rail trail along the disused Derwent Valley rail line is another possibility that the state government should fund a feasibility study into. Heritage rail enthusiasts have been trying for years to get a regular business up and running but with little success. From New Norfolk to Maydena there are beautiful views of river and forest and plenty of opportunities to sample farm-gate produce. A path from Granton to New Norfolk along the river would further cement the trip as a must-do for cycling tourists. Longer rail trails or paths have the added benefit of some people staying overnight in towns along the way.

8. Recommendations

- State government to implement ongoing funding to councils for all abilities cycling infrastructure that links major residential areas with workplaces, schools, shops and services to 20% of infrastructure budget.
- State government to work with a commercial provider to establish an interest-free loan scheme for people to buy e-bikes, encourage a commercial share e-bike provider to establish in Tasmania, offer salary sacrificing of bicycles to state employees and only lease buildings with adequate end-of-trip facilities.
- State government to change planning laws to require developers to provide cycle paths and connections in residential developments, minimum bicycle parking in new apartments and end-of-trip facilities in new commercial buildings.
- State and federal government to ensure adequate funding for next stages of the Coastal Pathway and fund a feasibility study into a Derwent Valley rail trail.
- State government to implement an all abilities cycling infrastructure design guide.