

# **Infrastructural Support for Bicycle Tourism**

**submission to the  
Standing Committee on Primary Industries  
and Regional Services**

**Inquiry into infrastructure and the  
development of Australia's regional areas**

by

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**Bicycle Federation of Australia**

April 1999

## Executive summary

- A national network of bicycle routes is a key element of a sustainable transport system for tourism, utility travel and recreation.
- Bicycle tourism can generate considerable wealth for regional economies and the nature of the income generated is such that it has high local multiplier effects (2.6 or better) in both money and employment.
- There are many significant benefits to increasing the usage of bicycles, as outlined in *Australia Cycling: the National Bicycle Strategy 1999 - 2004*, recently released by John Anderson, Federal Minister for Transport and Regional Services
- There are, at present, some significant infrastructural impediments to wider use of bicycles for tourism in rural and regional Australia
- The infrastructural improvements needed to attract bicycle tourists are a very cost-effective way of increasing income from tourism.:
- Rail transport and bicycling are highly complementary. One provides a coarse, long-distance network, the other a fine, local network. We need to optimise this complementarity.



## About the Bicycle Federation of Australia

The Bicycle Federation of Australia (BFA) is the peak user group for bicycle advocacy in Australia. It was formally established in 1990.

Membership is primarily drawn from State peak user groups but also includes the potential for non-voting supporting members.

### **Aims of the BFA**

- 1.To promote improvement in the safety and amenity of bicycling
- 2.To promote the increased use of bicycles for transport and recreation throughout Australia
- 3.To investigate and promote uniform traffic rules and road design standards, especially as they apply to bicycle usage, and to investigate and promote bicycle facility design standards throughout Australia
- 4.To investigate and promote appropriate national standards for bicycles and associated equipment
- 5.To promote the obligations and rights of bicyclists as responsible and legitimate road users
- 6.To promote effective traffic law enforcement and road safety education for other road users
- 7.To represent, nationally and internationally, the interests of the member bicycling organisations
- 8.To provide a forum for the exchange of information and ideas between all members
- 9.To provide support to member bodies to promote, defend and protect the rights of bicyclists
- 10.To provide advice and information (within the means of the Federation) to government or its agencies, business and other groups and individuals

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# Introduction

Tourism is already a major contributor to rural economies and is growing rapidly. In many of its present forms, however, it is a heavy user of petroleum-based transport and we need to work hard on building attractive alternatives. One important alternative is bicycle tourism, and this submission details a strategy for infrastructural development to facilitate that.

Bicycle tourism has particularly high economic and employment multiplier effects in local communities. A major side benefit of encouraging bicycle tourism is that the networks we build can also serve some of the transport needs of local people, and can serve to encourage them to keep their own business in town.

## The role of the bicycle in rural travel

Bicycling has a great deal to contribute to transport in rural areas, and has potential to generate considerable economic activity and employment.

Very few Australians live on vast sheep stations. Even in the countryside, the majority of people live in, or relatively close to, small towns and a good proportion of their trips are relatively short. That is, unless they have acquired the habit of bypassing the local town for the nearest regional centre because of the ease of going there by car.

Cycling can be an even better transport option in the country than in the city because the roads may be quieter and the trips much more pleasant.

## The value of bicycle touring

Bicycling infrastructure can help bring large numbers of bicycle tourists to an area for a relatively small investment.

Tourism is increasing apace in Australia and has the potential both to create considerable economic welfare and to wreak havoc environmentally and socially. By 2000 AD, there may be five million tourists visiting Australia per year. It is vital that we look to sustainable modes of tourism.

Bicycle tourism is pre-eminent amongst those sustainable modes. Because bicycles are small and relatively cheap, it is easy to disregard cycling as a mode of travel. Cycle tourists, however, tend to have at least as much money in their pockets as do car tourists, and possibly more discretionary spending power because their travel costs may be lower. As research by Tourism Victoria has shown (Hopkins 1999), backpacker tourists (of which cycletourists are a subset) spend less per day - about \$59 - than the average overseas tourist, but stay much longer or return more often, and thus tend to spend about double the average per capita.

Importantly, given their much greater numbers, per capita spending per day amongst local cycletourists is quite similar to this, according to data from Bicycle Victoria's Great Rides and the Bicycle Institute of NSW's Big Ride.

The spending of cycletourists tends to be of kinds that have high multiplier effects in local economy and employment. Cyclists are noted consumers of locally-produced foods and drinks: cakes and breads, wines and beers, cheeses, mustards and relishes. They are also seen buying local value-added goods such as clothing.

Although the abiding image of the cycletourist has them camping in tents, cyclists are also great users of B&B accommodation, because it saves having to carry the tent, sleeping bag and stove.

The process of making tourists welcome in an area can have a strong effect on local morale because it involves local people themselves discovering and thinking about aspects of their own area, and their own community, which they can be proud to tell outsiders.

The infrastructure to facilitate bicycle touring is very cheap compared to that required for many other kinds of tourism, and the provision of the infrastructure has a high labour-to-capital ratio, hence has a high local multiplier effect in itself.

The making of bicycle trails, their signage, mapping and the building of associated facilities requires a variety of skills at levels well suited to many long-term unemployed rural

people. It is also work that can fit in well with the seasonality of farming and can provide farming families with supplemental income in the off season and thus keep them on the land.

## **Trails and networks**

An important aspect of bicycle touring infrastructure is the creation of named trails such as the Mawson Trail in South Australia, the Tasmanian Trail (appendix B), the NSW Coastline Cycleway (appendix C) and the Murray River Trail. But even more important is the linking of trails into a coherent network.

Trails and networks may exist on existing infrastructure and purpose-built paths. Important examples of the use of existing infrastructure are the Rails-to-Trails proposals mapped in appendices A and D.

The important factor with trails of any kind is consistency over the whole system in the signage and the accessibility.

## **Local usage of networks**

If a cycletouring path network serves local people's needs as well as those of visitors, the trail system will be better maintained, because local riders are much more likely to report problems to the authorities. The network will also have a greater social mass, making it a more welcoming environment for travellers.

# **Present impediments to bicycle usage**

Cycletouring is a marginal activity in present-day Australia because of several major disincentives, both infrastructural and institutional.

Some significant infrastructural impediments are:

- The major roads throughout Australia are intimidating for most cyclists. Until we can have ordinary men, women and children able to ride in the countryside, cycletouring will remain a sectional activity.
- Minor roads tend to be poorly mapped, insufficiently signed and not always well networked for touring. It takes considerable expertise to plan a good bicycle tour in absence of specific infrastructure.
- With the closure of so many bridges on minor roads, cyclists can be faced with a long and time-consuming detour, often with no advance warning. It is vital that disused road (and rail) bridges be maintained as thoroughfares for cyclists and walkers.
- There are fewer trains on fewer lines running fewer services to fewer stations, and they often cannot take bicycles, or are limited to two single bikes (no tandems or tricycles).
- Road coaches are even more restrictive, with bicycles only carried at the driver's discretion.
- Interstate carriage of bicycles by rail is exorbitant. It costs \$50 per bike, per state, whereas other luggage travels free. By contrast, bicycles travel free or cost just \$20 per trip by air within Australia.
- Water stops and other facilities are more widely spaced than they used to be. Many parts of Outback Australia had higher populations last century than now, and people could walk, ride or cycle from place to place. Water supplies used to be available, even in the driest country, at intervals of 15 km or so, but most of these have dried up through neglect.

Specific impediments to local bicycle use are:

- Regionalisation of schools.
- Loss of local businesses.
- Removal of government services to regional centres.
- Lack of local public transport.

Institutional impediments include:

- Decline of the long weekend. As a result of unlinking many public holidays from weekends, much of Victoria is now inaccessible to urban dwellers except on annual vacation. It generally requires a long weekend to make the journey worthwhile to any town more than about 100 km from the state capital.
- Excess working hours and unemployment Unemployed people cannot afford to travel much. People working excessive hours have no time to travel. The economic result in both cases is that what money they spend tends to stay in the cities .

## Developing cycle tourism

It is easy to think of overseas travellers when talking of tourism but it is important to realise just how much travel is done by people from interstate, from another region of the state (especially the capital city) and how much is recreation by locals.

Overseas travellers spend the most per capita but, because of the disparity in numbers, locals and city people can be a bigger spender overall. This is why the lack of long weekends and good train schedules can have such an effect on tourist revenues.

### Infrastructure for walking and cycling.

Bicycling is deeply rooted in Australian culture. People were bicycling all over our huge country before 1900 - decades before the Dutch made any significant use of bicycles. Besides the dreadful climate of the Netherlands, Dutch cultural traditions did not easily accommodate human-powered transport for any but artisans (Moed, pers. comm. 1996). Bicycling remained a major means of transport for rural and urban workers well into the 1950s (Fitzpatrick, 1980).

Because bicycling has neither the romance of horseriding nor the visibility of car travel, bicycling is largely overlooked as a means of transport and touring even when it is widely used.

Today, bicycling has a great deal to contribute to transport in rural areas, and has potential to generate considerable economic activity and employment.

Bicycling is primarily suited to short trips but what is generally overlooked is that most trips are short, even vacation trips. Although great distances may be travelled by train, car or aeroplane to reach a place of vacation, most trips within the vacation area will be short and well suited to bicycling.

In the context of everyday travel, the habitual travelling of large distances by car is tearing rural communities apart, especially through shopping trips to regional centres. Good infrastructure for walking and cycling can help refocus country towns by making local trips significantly more convenient and pleasurable than trips to larger regional centres. A key element of cost-effective planning of bicycle infrastructure for bicycle tourism is to provide a network for all people to ride on. If network is not attractive to locals for their own transport needs, we need to improve the network. Local usage helps give the network a social vitality and it makes maintenance easier because there are so many people regularly inspecting - and reporting on - its condition as they ride about on their business.

Easy riding and walking locally, through appropriate infrastructure and mapping, encourage people to interact and to shop, locally. This is self-reinforcing because the town gains vitality and attractiveness with more people on the streets and paths, rather than cars just rushing through.

Cycling can actually be an even better transport option in the country than in the city because the roads may be quieter and the trips much more pleasant. Even if trips distances were greater in country areas than in the city, the relative lack of obstructions and interruptions generally means that such trips might take no more time or effort than a much shorter urban trip.

### Multiple use

As well as providing a safe and healthy way to school, a good path network facilitates

children and adolescents exploring their region safely. The more they learn to love their hometown, they are more likely to stay, or to return to it after study in the city.

It is of vital importance that cycling and walking facilities form a coherent network so that they can be used for all kinds of trips. Evidence is accumulating that it is as unhelpful to categorise cycleways and walkways as “recreational” or “utility” as it is to categorise roads.

For instance: if a rider takes a slightly longer but more pleasant way to work, is that a recreational or a utility trip? With good facilities, walking and cycling for utilitarian journeys can themselves comprise valuable recreation.

This particularly applies to travel by women. In their usual multiple roles of worker, mother, cook and quartermaster, their travel needs are much more complex than simple commuting or recreational riding. Is the time spent riding home from school with the children worktime, commuting, recreation, education, nurturing or exercise? It is, of course, all of these and more.

## **Trails and networks**

An important aspect of bicycle touring infrastructure is the creation of named trails such as the Mawson Trail in South Australia, the Trans-Tasmania Trail and the Murray River Trail, but equally important is the linking of trails into a coherent network.

Many key tourist attractions, such as the Grampians, the Blue Mountains and Wilsons Promontory, are not necessarily part of any logical trail as such but they should certainly be accessible to cycle tourists.

It is also important to have alternatives within the network so that return visitors have new paths to discover. Given that the cost of attracting new visitors to an area is estimated (Lumsdon 1999) to be around ten times the cost of retaining regular patrons, the costs of providing a network of trails may be far less than the costs of attracting people to a simple linear trail that brings few return visitors.

However, networks are unspectacular things compared to named trails. Politicians need visible projects as measures of their success and named trails are an important part of the mix because they are a symbol or emblem by which the whole network is more-readily promoted.

## **Priorities**

To create bicycling networks economically we need to realise that much of Australia is already ridden by touring cyclists. For the most part, what we need to do is link up what is already there.

Trails and networks may comprise quiet roads, bikeways or lanes along highways, disused railways, access roads along railways and waterways, public rights-of-way and purpose-built paths. The important factor in creating the facilities is consistency over the whole system in the signage and the accessibility. That is, the level of stress or difficulty along a particular route should be consistent so that - for instance - a beginner rider does not suddenly find the track becomes too difficult when already halfway along it.

It is vital that old bridges are retained, at least as cyclist/walker bridges. With so many bridges being close on secondary roads throughout Australia, this has become a key issue. The detour to an alternative bridge can be prohibitively far for a cyclist or walker, especially if - as is often the case - there is little advance warning and the closure does not appear on available maps.

It is essential, but too often overlooked, to survey bicycle routes by bicycle. Sections of the Howitt Trail in Gippsland, for instance, were evidently only surveyed by car. Although on nice, quiet roads, it lacked sufficient water stops and it included sandy road that - although easy by car - were impassable by bicycle. Conversely, some tracks that cannot be driven even in a jeep can be relatively easy by bicycle.

# Conclusions

Bicycle touring is a highly sustainable form of tourism. Bicycle tourists are good spenders and encouraging them is very cost-effective.

Bicycles are also very efficient transport for everyday short trips and networks of bicycle paths can contribute a lot to improving community fitness, and the wellbeing of the community itself.

Providing for bicycle travel should not attempt to distinguish too strongly between tourist travel and utility travel, but should comprise networks that serve all types of riding, just as roads provide for all kinds of travel.

Rail systems and cycling networks complement each other and should be planned with this in mind.

Easy travel by car has robbed country areas of much of their economic and civic life. Encouraging local travel by bicycle can help bring back some of this vitality.

Working conditions, especially in the cities, need to be improved to allow people more time in the countryside; more time to spend their money on goods and services with high economic multiplier effects, rather than imported luxuries.

Large schools make necessary unsustainable modes of transport, and they may not be educationally efficient in the broader context.

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# Appendix I:

## Cycling and sustainability

Australia is scattered with ghost towns, many the result of the enormous but unsustainable alluvial gold mining of the mid-nineteenth century. In this century we have seen the near-extinction, in the 1930s, of the koala through the lucrative but unsustainable fur trade.

The koala is now bringing in a sustainable wealth of tourist dollars that will repay, many times over, the short-term economic pain of ending the koala fur trade all that time ago.

Australia has a very fragile ecology and it is paramount that we strive for ecological sustainability in all areas in order to give us economic and social sustainability.

Bicycle touring is not only an eminently sustainable form of tourism and local transport, it a powerful symbol of sustainability. Through fostering bicycling, governments can be seen to be committed to a sustainable future.

### Economy

Spending by bicycle tourists tends to high multiplier effects in local communities because a high proportion of the expenditure is on food and accommodation, including local wines, cheeses and other foods.

Bicycles are economical in themselves and bicycle transport requires relatively little in infrastructure funding for a given capacity.

Because bicycles use little fuel in their manufacture, use, maintenance or repair, their usage is less subject to rises in the price of oil worldwide. The cost of transport fuels is certain to rise steeply as Australian reserves dry up and as world production peaks, probably within 15-20 years. Fuel is already an important item of our international balance of payments and looks set to become markedly more important.

Bicycles are not currently manufactured in Australia in significant numbers, although some components are. Some specialist bicycle component manufacture is ideal for decentralisation. *Bunyip* brand pannier bags for touring are amongst the very best available anywhere in the world and are manufactured on Brunie Island, off Tasmania. Wayne Kotzur, one of Australia's more innovative specialist bicycle manufacturers, is based in Gundaroo, NSW.

Australia used to have a large bicycle industry, but it was allowed to decline under trade policies of the 1980s and beyond. Given the apparent direction of energy and resource costs, it is pertinent to consider whether the bicycle industry in Australia should be given the kind of encouragement and assistance given at present to the car builders and the textiles-clothing-and-footwear industries. If really good, locally-made touring bicycles were readily available, there could be a significant export industry with overseas tourists electing to buy their bicycles and equipment here and take them home afterwards

### Employment

The making of bicycle trails, their signage, mapping and the building of associated facilities is work that has quite a high labour-to-capital ratio. It comprises a variety of skill levels and is thus very well suited to the skill levels of many long-term unemployed rural people.

Once the trails are in place, the extra income from bicycle tourism should sustain employment levels

Bicycle tourists are big spenders on food and other local produce, and on accommodation; all good generators of local employment. These areas have large economic "multiplier effects" in local communities; that is, the money stays in the community for longer to do more. The Bureau of Resource Economics estimates tourist expenditure in general to have a multiplier effect of around 2.6, but bicycle touring will better this somewhat because of the proportion spent on accommodation, local food and other local produce. By

contrast, petrol expenditure goes almost straight out of the community in costs and taxes.

## **Society and community**

The availability of fast, easy transport has transformed human life in the twentieth century. In many ways, this has been enormously beneficial. The Flying Doctor, for instance, can travel in hours over distances that took weeks or months by camel. The availability of motor transport relieved country people of their geographical isolation and has allowed access to services inconceivable a century ago.

Paradoxically, the ease with which people can move not merely to, but beyond, their own town has contributed to the breakdown of rural societies. It is so easy to travel to the cornucopic emporia of regional centres that the small, service-oriented shops of local towns are starved of business and the towns themselves drained of their life. This loss of the vitality of country towns means, in turn, that they have far less to tempt their young people to stay, so they drift to the major cities. The very transport that has made the country so accessible has served more to drain it of people than to populate it.

Cycling can actually help rebuild community. Because the optimal trip distances by bicycle are reasonably short, bicycle transport encourages people to live within a geographical range comparable with that of the local community. It also facilitates the incidental social encounters so vital in maintaining community.

Bicycling is available to much more of the population than is motoring. Particularly, it is available to young people and to those who cannot drive or cannot afford a car. Children can cycle, and so can old people. So can everyone in-between. Thus we encourage interactions over the whole community, rather than separating those who can, and those who cannot, drive.

## **Resources**

Bicycles have a low embodied energy and resource use in manufacture, maintenance and repair. Their use in replacing short car journeys can save considerable cold-start fuel use and engine wear.

Bicycles have great potential as a complement to railway systems because the optimal trip distances for cycling are very much the distances between railways and rail stations. By contrast, a car is more easily driven for an entire trip than it is driven to a railway station to await the train. Cars compete with railways, bicycles complement them.

It is important to realise that this complementarity applies to both urban and rural railways. The commuting distances around country town are seldom greater than those in large cities, and the distances between rail lines are well-fitted to bicycle touring, in Victoria and New South Wales, at least.

## **Environment**

Bicycles have a very low environmental impact in respect of fumes, noise or adverse presence.

Bicycling has particular value in replacing short car journeys with their attendant high air pollution.

But as well as being more environmentally benign in itself, bicycle transport allows a greater appreciation of the environment than does a closed vehicle of any sort.

## **Fitness**

Cycling is sustainable exercise. It is gentle, safe exercise that can be integrated easily with many people's lifestyles, so it need not be forgone for lack of time.

## Appendix 2

### Complementarity of rail and bicycle travel

Rail is a coarse network and needs a complementary, fine network to function effectively.

For passenger rail, the best complements are cycling and walking, not cars. While walking and cycling are at their best over the short distances needed, cars are at their worst. Once the car is started, it might as well be driven a long trip (replacing a train trip) as a short one (serving the train system).

If bicycles are to complement the rail system, the rail system must accommodate bicycles. This lies in two main areas:

- \* secure accommodation of commuter bikes at railway stations
- \* carriage of bicycles on recreational journeys off-peak and on weekends.

### Bicycle touring

Rail travel makes a delightful complement to bicycle touring. The train journey becomes part of the touring experience. It is quality time spent together with the group in final planning or in recapitulation and reflection. Neither cars nor buses offer this experience to any real degree.

Train travel makes for more-efficient recreational time than that wasted in motor transport. While bicycling and train travel are generally relaxing, car travel seldom is; it requires extra recreational time to recover from its rigours.

### Complementarity of bikes and trains

Country trains make accessible only a relatively small number of destinations. They rely to a huge measure on a complementary network of local buses, taxis ... and bicycles.

With a bicycle, the train network becomes the gateway to much of Victoria for weekend, or long-weekend, travel. Bicycle touring is a very effective way of complementing the efficiencies of rail travel and of bridging its limitations.

### What touring cyclists need of the train system

- accommodation of bicycles on trains in numbers that make for convivial travel. The limit of two bikes per Sprinter train rules them out for any group touring.
- reasonable frequency of service
- a rail network extensive enough that it can be "filled in" by bicycle transport.

Although a fit person on a touring bicycle can ride over 100 km per day, a range of 30 - 60 km per day is a more realistic figure for average riders. Thus lines and stops should not be further than about 60 km apart, at very most. This is now the case only for the lines close to Melbourne; much of the state is now out of reach of cyclists in the time usually available for recreational travel.

## Negative changes in recent time

### Closure of lines

A circulatory system needs all its links, not just the arteries. When the peripheral circulation of the body closes down, you get gangrene, not more-efficient circulation

### Removal of luggage vans

Not all rail travellers need luggage accommodation on all trips, but every time a rail traveller has to take alternative transport, just because of their luggage for a particular trip, the

more likely they are not to take another train.

### **Inability to book specific times.**

This may work for individuals but it is folly when accommodating groups. The entire group must be sure of a seat, not merely a few of the group.

Inability to book setdown stops for specific stations when a large group would like to disembark there. It is hard to see a good operational reason for this: it seems like administrative laziness alone.

### **Conversion of services to railcar operation.**

The operation of small, lightweight railcars, such as V-Line's Sprinter, is a useful economy, but the failure to adapt overseas models to the needs of local passengers - in the provision for bicycles, wheelchairs, surfboards and bulky luggage - was a very negative move. It is as if the administration designed the vehicles for what they wanted to carry on their trains, rather than what their passengers wanted to bring with them on the trains.

### **Lack of wall hooks**

Lack of wall hooks to which to fasten bicycles in guard's compartments. The old louvre vans, previously used as luggage vans - had innumerable fastening points but the guard's compartments have almost none.

## **Interstate travel**

Carriage of bicycles interstate by rail is a fiasco. Different conditions apply in each state and are often costly and highly discriminatory.

On the trip to Adelaide, for instance, a bicycle will cost you \$3 to transport from Melbourne to Bordertown, but \$23 (half adult fare) to transport it the shorter distance thence to Adelaide.

The cost of the South Australian section is discriminatory because it applies even if the bike is boxed while "sporting goods" and other luggage travel free. It is also highly counterproductive. Bikes travel free or cheaply on interstate air services and on interstate road coaches and cyclists do see those as competitive alternatives.

## **Changes we'd like to see**

- wider doors and accommodation for several bikes in each Sprinter car
- adequate hooks in luggage compartments to which to fasten bungees or ropes to hold bicycles securely
- common conditions across Australia for carriage of bikes on trains, based on the Victorian pricing model
- restoration of lines, especially the lines to Ararat (the gateway to the Grampians and the Avoca-area wineries) and Bairnsdale (gateway to eastern Victoria and the High Plains).
- room to carry tandem bikes on Sprinter and other railcars.

## Appendix 3

# A National Bicycle Industry Plan

The motor industry and the textiles-clothing-and-footwear industries benefit from national plans that help them survive in the face of international markets. This is because they are regarded as pivotal in Australia's economic wellbeing and its security.

It is time that the bicycle industry was accorded the same attention.

Bicycling in Australia continues to differ markedly from other markets worldwide and the bicycles we get from overseas are seldom really well suited to Australian cycling conditions. Over many decades, the local industry built up a deal of specific knowledge to suit Australian conditions, but that is being lost rapidly as manufacture goes offshore.

Australians currently make World-leading brands of bicycle pannier bags (Wilderness Equipment, Bunyip and Avance). Velocity, in Queensland, makes world-standard bicycle rims. Greenspeed recumbent tricycles are widely regarded as the best in the World for touring and general use.

Greenspeed, however, are having to consider "offshore" manufacture. It is simply not economic to employ Australians to produce top-quality Australian design. We have to ask: is it really cheaper to have people out of work and unable to afford the products of other Australian workers who will, in turn, lose *their* jobs?

Australian cycletouring conditions are different to those elsewhere. We get by on imported bikes, but they are seldom optimally suited to the task. In general, because of the distances between towns, the heat, the sunlight and the dryness, cyclists need to be more self-reliant. It is not always possible to ride from hostel to hostel, as is usual in Europe, so we must carry tent, sleeping and cooking gear, tools and spares, plus lots of water. Australia does make the bags for this, but not the luggage racks nor the bikes themselves. The bikes we do get are seldom really suitable for touring and most available racks are either too flexible under load, or too heavy. The situation is worsening with the widespread adoption of types of front suspension incompatible with carrying luggage at the front wheel.

Expertise exists in Australia to build touring bikes sell-suited to our conditions. Such machines could attract a big premium amongst adventure tourists worldwide, but such an investment in development and tooling requires a level of regulatory stability and protection from overseas trade thuggery that is not on offer to the bicycle industry.

Another area sadly lacking is in the provision of bicycles for people with young families. There is no bike on the Australian market that allows the secure carriage of a baby capsule, and a dearth of childseats that offer really satisfactory carriage of toddlers. Most of those available are insufficiently rigid and mount the child far too high for good control. This is exacerbated by their being mounted immediately over the back axle of the bike, making for unfortunate weight distribution. The situation is worsened yet further by the dearth of suitable luggage arrangements for the front of the bike, that can help balance the load.

A wonderful vehicle for a growing family is a child-back tandem, allowing the child to contribute to pedalling, but still be under parental control. Such machinery is beyond the economic reach of most of the families who could benefit from it, and we need to address this problem if we are to keep people cycling through parenthood.

We also lack bicycles for older people: bicycles that are stable to ride, easy to step over and gentle on old joints., and with controls that are simple and easy on arthritic fingers,

We can do far better, but there needs to be a national plan that recognises the importance of such design and manufacture and nurtures it.

If *Australia Cycling, the national bicycle strategy 1999- 2004* is to be of any lasting value, we need to ensure the availability of bicycles suitable for all riders, not just young, single, recreational riders. To achieve this, we need a National Bicycle Industry Plan.

# Appendix 4:

## Regional Development

### Regional schools

Most students at a large, regional school need to be driven by car or by bus but a smaller, local school can be within walking or cycling distance. Besides saving money and fuel, this helps engender greater self-reliance in students, and greater fitness.

We need to reassess the economics and efficiency of large, regional schools. Larger schools are not necessarily economical, particularly in country areas where they necessitate large amounts of travel and can weaken small communities.

The most common reason given for school mergers, that of subject choice, is probably given too much importance. Specific subjects studied at secondary school have relatively little influence on acceptance for employment or further study, so the quality teaching of a smaller range of subjects may be a much better idea, particularly in rural areas.

Then, too, the Internet is held to have great promise in distance education and reduced reliance on the teacher's specific subject knowledge.

We need to question in just what area large schools are economical. It is not enough to be cheaper; we need to make sure that they are doing as good a job educationally and socially.

Schools of over about 300 students are socially very different to smaller schools. They are more institutional and less social. This kind of difference can be critical in rural areas where the ability to work within the community is of vastly greater importance than in a large city.

### Value-adding

The importance of value-adding to local primary produce has some obvious advantages and some less obvious. Value adding links in with bicycle tourism because bicyclists tend to be big consumers of local produce, and because tourism and local industry complement each other in revitalising country towns.

Value-adding creates local employment in the actual production and in the multiplier effects throughout the local economy.

It also allows for more-economical use of natural resources. It is much easier to utilise wastes and by-products near the site of production than when the primary product is exported in bulk. Local elaboration of the produce also means that less need be used: forests can be selectively and renewably harvested rather than clearfelled, and farms can be diversified.

Such local production places a value on the distinctiveness of the local product. This allows farming to be more in sympathy with the local environment because the pressure is reduced for farmers to produce the absolutely homogeneous product required by large-scale outside industries.

Local value-adding has great potential to bring tourists to an area. Local wineries, small breweries, gourmet cheesemakers and such are good examples, but so are makers of woollen quilts and clothing, wooden furniture and even musical instruments.

Value-adding has an important social dimension as well. By increasing the diversity of skills in an area, it increases the resiliency of the community in the face of change and helps break down the sharp social barriers that exist in many small towns between people of differing levels of education and skills.

### Sustainable fuels

A potentially important area of value-adding is in the production of sustainable fuels such as alcohols and vegetable oils. These are most economically produced and used regionally, to reduce transport and distribution costs.

Some fuel crops, such as canola and sugarbeet, also have potential in reclaiming saline soils. This is highly important in several ways:

- bringing back hope, by reversing the degradation,
- generating local work, in growing, harvesting and processing,

- reducing the outflow of money for fuel,
- increasing national self-reliance.
- diversifying expertise throughout our country.

The cost of transport fuels is certain to rise steeply as Australian reserves dry up and as world production peaks, probably within 15-20 years. Fuel is already an important item of our international balance of payments and looks set to become markedly more important.

It is vital to realise that renewable fuels will never be as cheap or as available as Middle-Eastern oil is today. With the changeover to renewable fuels must come really major economies of use:

- a shift from road and air transport to rail and water,
- load-aggregating techniques including public transport,
- more local production and value-adding, and an end to flying fresh produce to fussy palates across the World
- more energy-efficient agricultural techniques, including the reduction of high-embodied-energy inputs such as nitrogenous fertilisers,
- widespread promotion of bicycling and walking for short trips and for recreation.

### **Restoration of “long weekends”**

As a result of unlinking many public holidays from weekends, much of Victoria is now inaccessible to urban dwellers except on annual vacation. It generally requires a long weekend to make the journey worthwhile to any town more than about 100 km from the state capital.

It is worth questioning, too, whether a public holiday breaking a working week into two short sections actually helps production in any industry, compared to extending the weekend by that same day.

Abolishing “long weekends” seems to have given dubitable benefits to city employers at great expense of rural economies. They should be restored and we should not be implementing this idea interstate without stringent analysis.

### **Excess working hours and unemployment**

Unemployed people are unable to spend very much, so they drag the economy down. They are also unable to travel much, so what spending they do make tends to be in town.

People working excessive hours have money to spend, but no time to travel anywhere to spend it, so the money - again - tends to stay in town. Furthermore, people with an excess of money to spend and little time spend disproportionately on imported luxuries.

The casualisation of the Australian workforce also has a deleterious effect on both worker fitness and their spending. Casual work, because of its uncertainties, makes people very cautious in their spending, and reluctant to take holidays.

Casualisation, excess working hours and unemployment all reduce the health of the people involved, and their ability to spend money away from home.

All these changed ways of working have disadvantaged rural economies more than those of cities.

By limiting the proportion of casual work and restricting working hours, as is done in the Netherlands, we can spread work amongst more people and ensure that people have enough time to get out of town, get their exercise and spend their money in ways that improve the national economy, and particularly, local rural economies.

# Appendix 5:

## Taxation reform

### The need to tax waste and pollution, not production

Proposed reductions in diesel fuel excise are being promoted as of benefit to Australia's farmers and rural dwellers, but we contend this to be very short-sighted and counterproductive.

Current worldwide oil production exceeds the rate of new discoveries by almost 4:1 (Fleay 1995) and world production is reliably estimated to peak in no more than about fifteen years time. After this, prices will rise sharply.

Australian production has already peaked and oil imports are a significant element of our Current Account Deficit. This is set to worsen as local - then world - supplies are depleted.

Farmers, along with other producers, need to be working *now* on systems of production and transport that make most-efficient use of energy to meet this future.

The way to encourage this economy is to make fuel *more* expensive, not less so.

To meet Australia's Greenhouse-Gas Reduction obligations we need to cut wastage of fuel in transport, industrial production and agriculture.

Recent research points strongly to diesel engines as a prime cause of premature death and debility through respiratory problems. This is a considerable cost to the Australian community and the taxes paid on diesel fuel and diesel engines should go some way towards meeting these costs. At present, they do not. Under the proposed reduction in taxes on diesel fuel, this gap will be far greater.

As Lovins, Lovins and von Weizsacker (1997) demonstrate, standard of living is only weakly linked to energy usage. They amply evidence their contention ("Factor Four") that we - collectively and individually - can live twice as well on half the resources we currently average.

Newman and Kenworthy (1992) demonstrate just how little linkage there is between car usage and Standard of Living in a number of cities worldwide. In many of the cities with very high standards of living: Amsterdam, Tokyo, New York, private car usage is very restrained, while usage was very high in several cities, such as Bangkok and Jakarta, where the average standard of living is very low.

Taxation is a valuable policy tool and it is of concern that the current proposals for a Goods and Services Tax appear to nullify this.

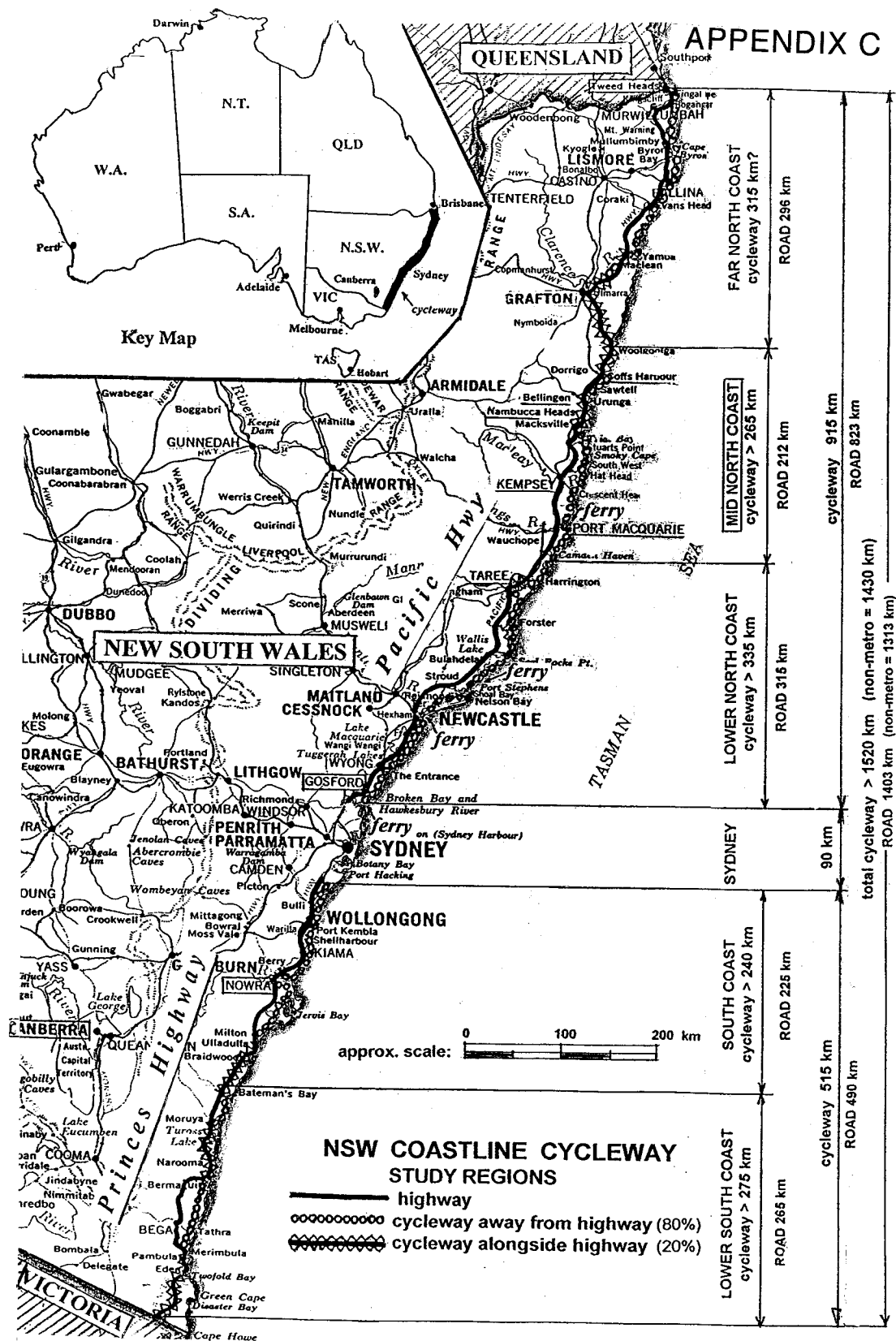
We need taxes that encourage people to move in the directions of cleaner and more energy-efficient modes of production, transport and living. Current proposals for tax reform fall far short of what is needed in that respect.

As Alan Parker expresses it in the Bicycle Federation of Australia submission on tax reform:

*"The GST proposed at the last general election is as unsustainable as the existing tax system but a well thought-out GST is not inherently ecologically unsustainable or inequitable. Indeed Greenpeace Germany devised an eco-tax proposal with a redistributive effect benefiting poorer households. Furthermore the Dutch experience in implementing their National Environment and Policy Plan (NEPP) clearly shows that green taxes (eco-taxes) have great potential to increase the quality of life while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and oil dependence. Likewise Taxes on heavy metals have reduced the leakage of cadmium, mercury, and zinc by 90 % since 1976 in the Netherlands.*

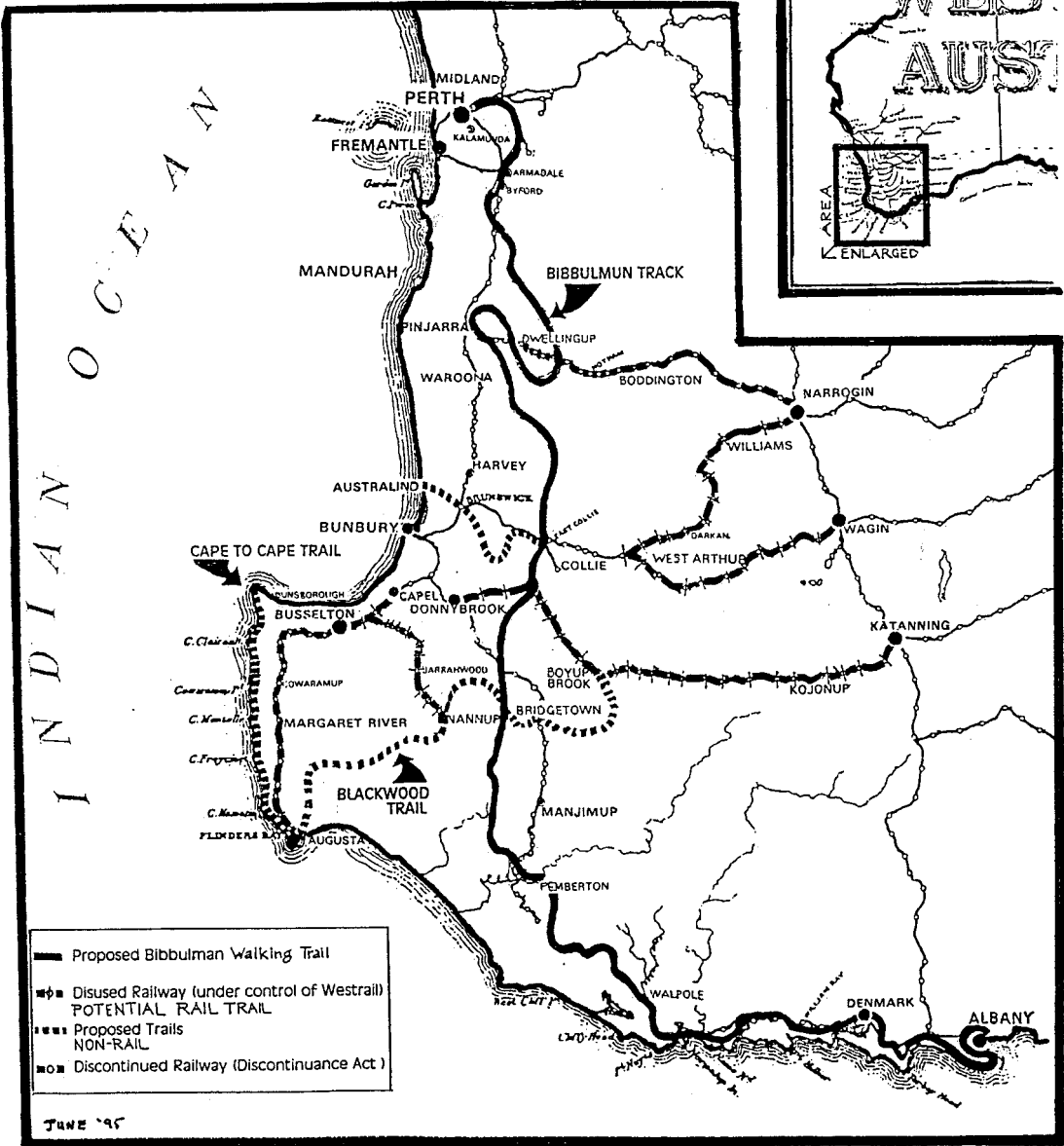
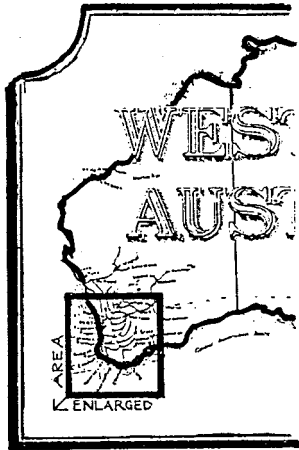
*Indeed the Dutch have moved away from taxing labour to the taxation of environmental harmful activities so as to stimulate sustainable production and consumption (NEPP 3 1998). Today we need eco-taxes that replace disincentives to employ people with incentives to encourage sustainable and healthy transport behaviours or activities that protect the environment."*



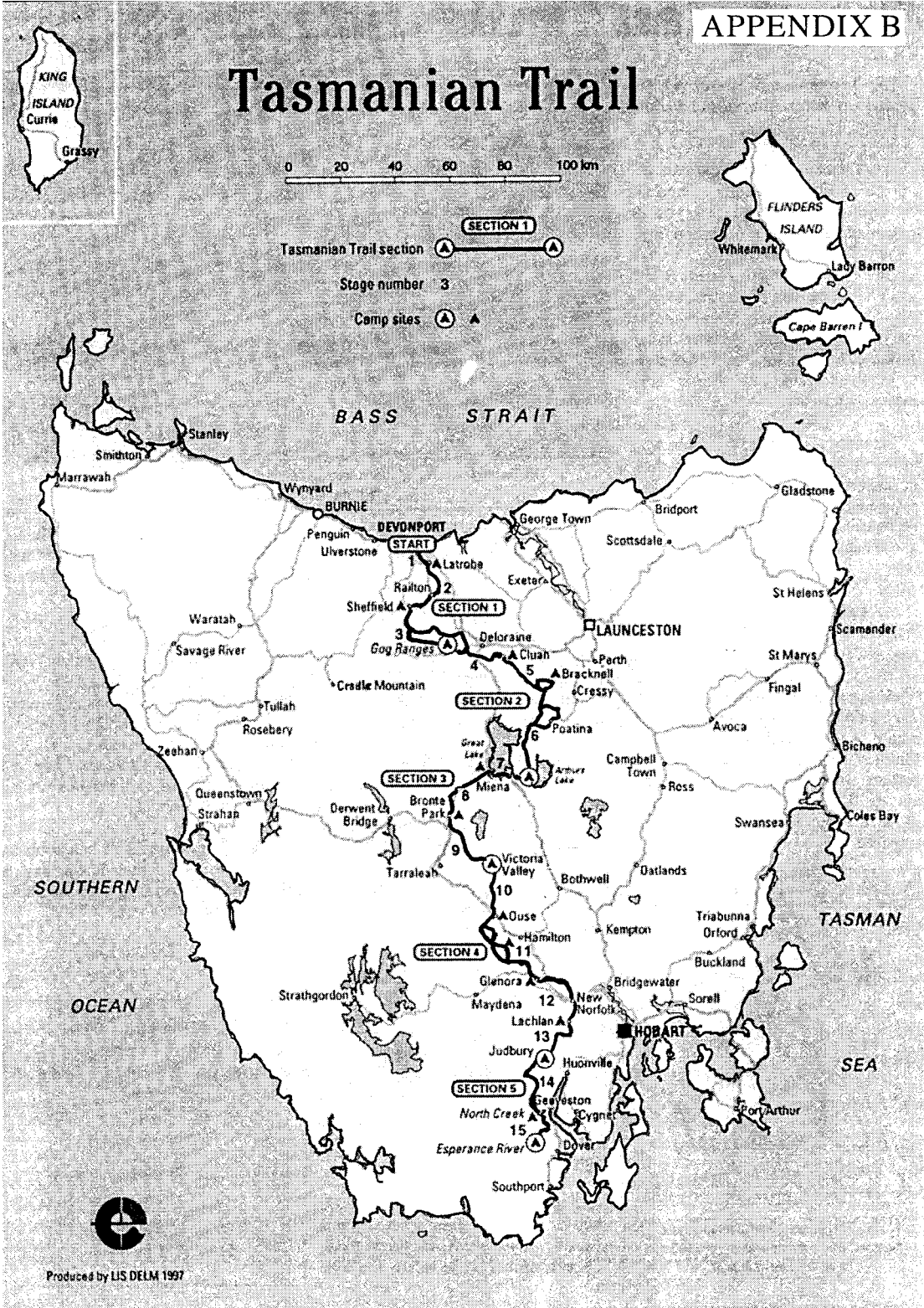


# Proposed Trails of S-W Western Australia

APPENDIX D  
**Rails to Trails**  
 Cycle - Walk - Horse Ride  
 P.O. Box 223, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002



# Tasmanian Trail



# APPENDIX A

