

Inquiry into Infrastructure  
and the  
Development of Australia's  
Regional Areas

Cycling and Cycle Tourism  
Opportunities  
in the  
Hunter Region of NSW

Cycling Facilities For All of the Community All of the Time



**Submission prepared by  
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## **Forward**

Newcastle Cycleways Movement Incorporated (NCM) was formed in 1977 as a community based group to work with State and Local Government bodies to improve bicycle facilities in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie Region. Its aims are to promote the safe responsible use of bicycles for transport, leisure and fitness. It is the nominated voice of all cycling groups in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie region on issues relating to safety for cycling and the improvement of cycling facilities. NCM brings a wide variety of expertise to cycling, ranging from members who

- ❖ have been international bicycle touring;
- ❖ have civil engineering and road designing experience;
- ❖ regular commuting cyclists as well as the occasional social family riders; along with
- ❖ members of the community who just support the need for cycling facilities as a means of ecologically sustainable transport and recreation.

Darrell Stone started cycling as a means of transport. More recently, he has toured extensively by bicycle with his wife and sons in Australia and New Zealand, as well as using a bicycle for commuting and fitness. He is one of a number of Tour Leaders in NCM who conducts regular tours catering for up to 100 bicycle riders around the lower Hunter Region. These NCM tours range from half-day excursions to unsupported trips by bicycle over periods of up to 4 days duration utilising camping, hotel or motel accommodation.

## Glossary

<i>Term</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>Bicycle friendly</i>	Attuned to the needs of cyclists with extensive on-road and off-road cycleways; low speed traffic zones; secure bike parking facilities; together with shower and change facilities in office blocks and other workplaces.
<i>Commuter</i>	A cyclist or pedestrian who regularly travels from their residence to their workplace, school, shopping centre or recreational centre by bicycle or on foot.
<i>Commuter route</i>	The route taken by commuters to work or educational institutions.
<i>Cycleway</i>	A clearly designated path for cyclists usually made of concrete or bitumen with a minimum width of 2.5 metres, or hard packed gravel of between 2 - 3 metres wide. It can be either a marked lane at the side of a road or a path which is away from roads. As a bicycle is an unsprung vehicle, the surface should be smooth to provide for the comfort of the rider. For the purposes of this submission, "cycleway" should also be read as "shared pedestrian/cycleway".
<i>Low stress cycling</i>	Cycling in an area which has a high degree of safe cycling and low potential for motor vehicle/bicycle confrontations, such as an off-road cycleway.
<i>Mountain bike</i>	A robust bicycle with heavy duty wheels and wide tyres that can be taken off pavement and ridden along bush trails and over hilly rough terrain.
<i>Near miss</i>	A circumstance where a motor vehicle/bicycle collision almost occurred.
<i>Recreational cyclist</i>	A cyclist who occasionally rides a bicycle, usually at weekends, either as a means of maintaining fitness or just a leisurely ride.
<i>Road shoulder</i>	Outside edge of the road, usually consisting of the same surface material as the road varying in widths of up to about 3 metres.
<i>Shared pedestrian/cycleway</i>	An off-road bitumen or concrete path of at least 2.5 metres in width which is shared by both pedestrians and cyclists.

## **Executive Summary**

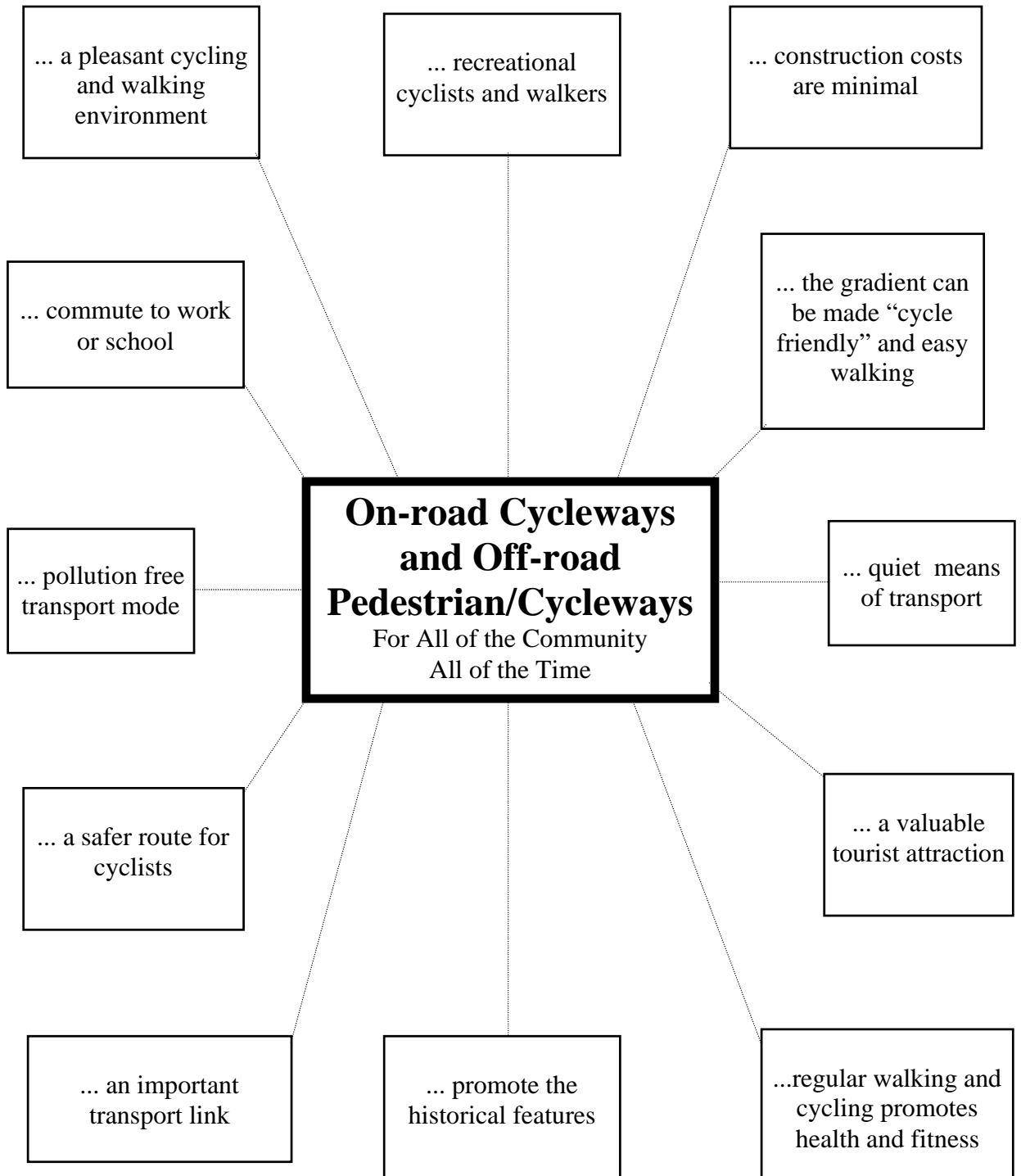
In this proposal, you will be shown the benefits that can be gained by actively implementing the Federal Government's National Bicycle Strategy and rectifying the deficiencies in the effective cycling links throughout the Hunter Region.

This proposal will show how its implementation will offer significant benefits in transport opportunities and to the health of the local community, as well as assisting the local economy by providing additional employment opportunities through construction and the increased attraction of eco-tourists to the region.

You will be further be shown:

- ❖ that the safe cycling offered by the implementation of this proposal will provide significant benefits to all of the community compared to the hazards experienced in the existing infrastructure;
- ❖ that this proposal promotes an environmentally friendly means of transport which will help to provide substantial and extensive eco-tourism opportunities;
- ❖ that the facilities will provide assets that can be used by all of our community members to improve their health by either walking or cycling as an alternate means of transport, helping to reduce pollution and costs to Governments in health funding;
- ❖ the economic and social benefits to be gained by the implementation of this proposal;
- ❖ who the potential users of these facilities would be, and why they will use them; and
- ❖ why it makes sound economic sense for the Federal Government to provide an increase in funding to enable these proposals to happen.

## Summary of Benefits to the Community of Cycleways





## **Introduction**

The bicycle has been used in Australia as an efficient means of transport since the late 1800's through to the 1950's, particularly in outback and rural Australia. This was so because it needed no food or water and it was two or three times faster than a horse or camel. Early this century, a bicycle cost about the same as a reliable horse. Today, reliable bicycles can be purchased from as low as \$200 with better quality bicycles available in the \$500 - \$1,000 price range.

In the last fifteen years or so, more bicycles have been sold in Australia (about 800,000 p.a.) than new cars. This coincides with significant improvements in bicycle technology with the development of better, cheaper gearing systems together with lighter bikes made from exotic alloys, aluminium, carbon fibre and titanium. The advent of the Mountain Bike (MTB) caused rapid development in these areas, and now it is common for these bikes to have 24 gears and some of the newer models have 27 gears. They will just about climb anything and the range of gearing helps cyclists to travel greater distances with less effort.

The concept of our proposal covers the formation of a Hunter Region tourist bicycle path similar to those in Europe along the Danube and Rhine Rivers; the Sustrans trails of the UK; those of North America; along with cycling facilities in New Zealand. These cycleways carry thousands of cyclists each day over an extensive network covering significant distances. We believe that such facilities will provide additional employment, both in their initial construction, and as the eco-tourism develops further into our region. These cycling improvements will also serve to complement and enhance the local transport infrastructure for the residents in our respective communities.

This submission has chosen cycling and intermodal travel as the major need for improvement in this region. These modes of travel offer many opportunities for the benefit of our communities because:

- ❖ Cycling is an environmentally friendly means of travelling that requires minimal additional capital or maintenance once the facilities have been constructed.
- ❖ By linking cycleways to other modes of transport, such as rail or ferry, far greater options for travelling distances are provided for all members of the community. It allows door-to-door travel on environmentally efficient modes of transport.
- ❖ Cycling offers significant health and fitness benefits for the community in that it enables riders to exercise and achieve higher cardiovascular rates without the damaging skeletal jarring caused by jogging. By using cycling as a means of transport, exercise becomes a secondary benefit.
- ❖ By the construction of an effective mix of on-road and off-road facilities, the community can have a wide range of cycling alternatives that caters for young school children through to the seasoned tourist or commuting cyclist.

It is proposed that it will use existing on-road/off-road cycleways, secondary arterial roads and will require

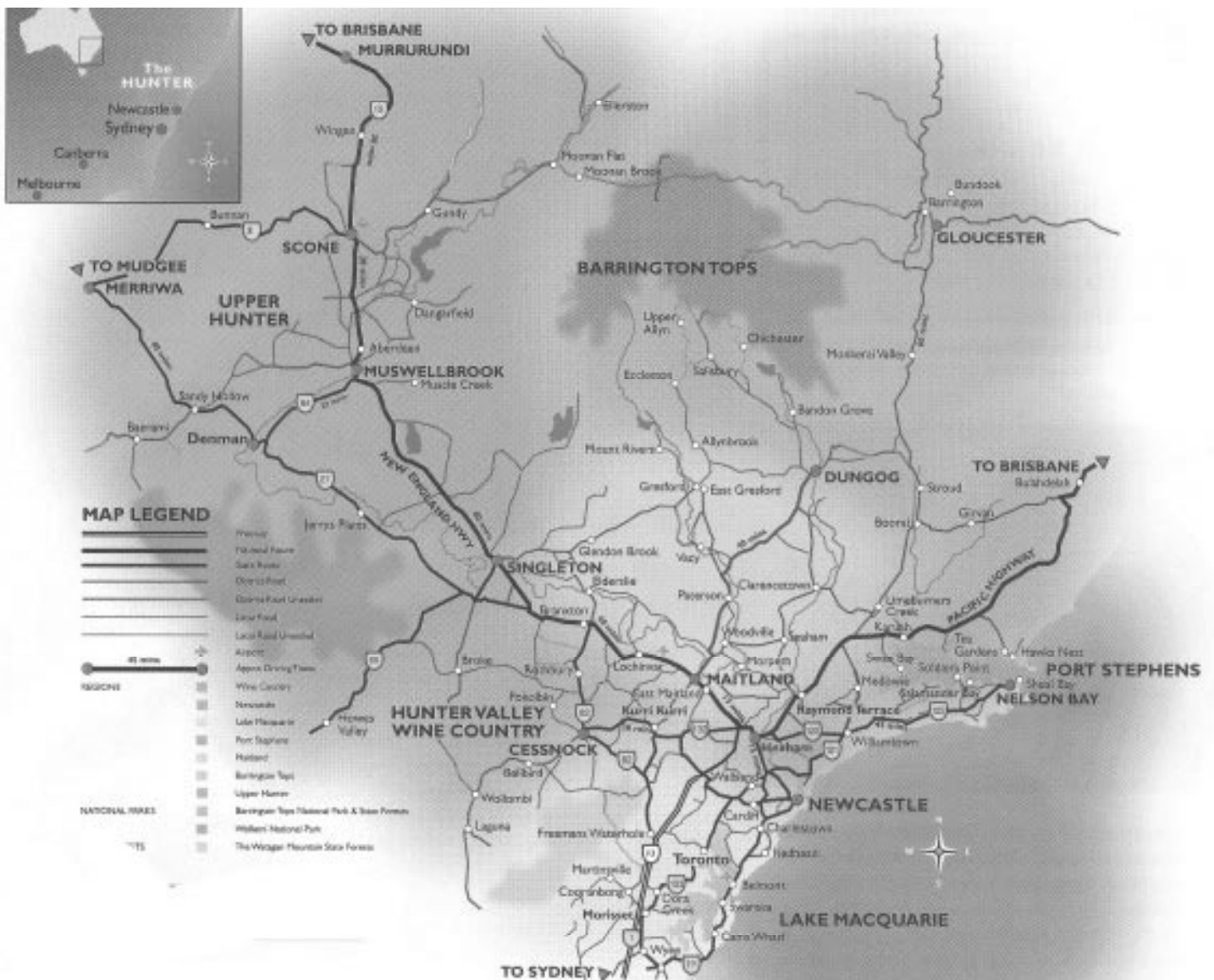
- ❖ the development of new facilities by improving the existing roads to cater better for cyclist's needs - eg. wide marked shoulder lanes on-roads, not only make it safer for cyclists, but they also extend the life of the road and help to make it safer other road users;
- ❖ the construction of off-road cycleways to complement on-road facilities, where tourist attractions can be enhanced - such as the Lower and Upper Hunter vineyards, Adamstown/Belmont railway line - and where off-road facilities make a better alternative;
- ❖ rejuvenation of the convict built Great North Road to provide an historic eco-tourism experience for cyclists and walkers alike;

- ❖ links to the proposed NSW Coastline Cycleway;
- ❖ the use of land adjacent to existing operational railways, water pipelines and high voltage powerline easements for the construction of off-road cycleways; and
- ❖ the conversion of closed/abandoned railway lines to paved and hard packed gravel trails catering for cycling and pedestrian use. (The Canadian and US governments are now spending hundreds of millions of dollars to bring this type of tourist attraction to fruition in their respective countries.)

## The Hunter Region

### LOCATION

The area covered by this proposal is situated in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales. It is about 160kms north of Sydney, less than 100kms from the Central Coast of NSW and approximately mid way between Brisbane and Melbourne.



Map supplied by De Meyrick Communications  
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The Local Government Areas (LGA's) that have been included and consulted in the preparation of this submission are:

<b>Local Government Area</b>	<b>Population ('000)</b>	<b>Area (sq. kms)</b>
Cessnock City Council	45	5,050
Dungog Shire Council	9	2,250
Gloucester Shire Council	5	2,920
Great Lakes Shire Council	32	3,330
Lake Macquarie City Council	180	750
Maitland City Council	52	400
Merriwa Shire Council	3	3,510
Murrurundi Shire Council	2	2,470
Muswellbrook Shire Council	16	3,700
Newcastle City Council	134	220
Port Stephens Shire Council	52	990
Scone Shire Council	5	4,000
Singleton Shire Council	22	4,890
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b><i>557</i></b>	<b><i>34,480</i></b>

From this, you can see that the area being represented includes about 3% of Australia's population occupying less than 0.45% of its landmass.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES**

The Hunter Region consists of relatively flat to gently rolling terrain that is ideal for cycling. It is bordered by a series of ranges to the north, south and west, with the Pacific Ocean being its eastern boundary. These geographical features have created a unique environment where:

- ❖ its coastal and inland waterways offer extensive opportunities for tourism;
- ❖ the climate provides comfortable year round weather;
- ❖ rainfall is sufficient to sustain a variety of crops, including that required to make the world renowned Hunter wines, but not enough to make for unpleasant cycling;

- ❖ prevailing moderate winds - an important consideration to cyclists - are from the east in summer and from the west in winter; and
- ❖ its bordering ranges offer many added opportunities for many varieties of eco-tourism.

### **HISTORY OF THE REGION**

Aboriginal settlement was extensive through our region. Unfortunately, to date, little has been done in the way of promoting its culture, history and sites for tourism.

Much of the later history of the region has been shaped by the timber, mining, steel, shipping and rural industries. They have provided legacies of:

- ❖ a highly skilled workforce;
- ❖ historic villages, buildings and sites;
- ❖ an extensive transport infrastructure - including a number of closed railway lines; and
- ❖ settlements within comfortable cycling distances of one another.

### **ITS INFRASTRUCTURE**

The region is served by regular road, rail and air transport. It has accommodation facilities ranging from caravan parks, B&B's, hostels, hotels through to 5 star motels. The services offered in the areas of settlement range from a community store through to normal city facilities. Although in some of the towns/villages, the lack of banking facilities is a major issue.

There is an extensive range of highways, primary and secondary bitumen link roads, as well as other gravel roads. However, the distance covered by off-road cycleways in the region is not extensive. Designated on-road cycleways are also limited in distances

covered and their number. There are, however, opportunities to economically remedy this situation, and these will be discussed later in this submission.

### **UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS**

The available workforce within this region offers an extensive range of skills covering all aspects of community needs, ranging from high tech manufacturing to rural development. Due to the nature of the economy of the region, its unemployment levels have been severely effected by the pending closure of the BHP steelworks in Newcastle, along with the downturn in the mining and minerals markets. The following table provides an indication of the approximate levels of unemployment in the respective LGA's.

<b>Local Government Area</b>	<b>Major Economic Drivers</b>	<b>Unemployment</b>
Cessnock City Council	Tourism, vineyards, aluminium smelter	13%
Dungog Shire Council	Farming, tourism	12%
Gloucester Shire Council	Beef and dairy cattle	10%
Great Lakes Shire Council	Tourism, oyster farming, timber	14%
Lake Macquarie City Council	Retail, wholesaling, light industry, power generation, coal mining	11%
Maitland City Council	Retail, commercial, light industry	10%
Merriwa Shire Council	Agriculture	8%
Murrurundi Shire Council	Farming and grazing	8%
Muswellbrook Shire Council	Coal mining, power generation, agriculture, viticulture	8%
Newcastle City Council	Heavy and light industry, service industries - community services, health, education	13%
Port Stephens Shire Council	Tourism, RAAF, aluminium smelter	10%
Scone Shire Council	Abattoirs, beef and dairy cattle, thoroughbred horse breeding	8%
Singleton Shire Council	Coal mining, power generation, Army base	6%

Youth unemployment in the region is very high and is of major concern. By providing safer cycling routes, an affordable means of transport would become available enabling these unemployed to both extend their search for work and then travel to it using bicycle and local transport hubs.

**EXISTING TOURIST ATTRACTIONS**

The local Councils have nominated the following as their primary tourist attractions:

<b>Local Government Area</b>	<b>Major Tourism Generators</b>
Cessnock City Council	Vineyards/wineries; restaurants; events/festivals; adjacent mountain ranges; Great North Convict Road; Richmond Vale Mining Museum and other heritage sites; and golf courses
Dungog Shire Council	Barrington Tops; Allyn River; Williams River; Chichester Dam; Mt Allyn/Burruga Swamp; and various heritage sites
Gloucester Shire Council	Hookes Creek Resort; Copeland Gold Mine; Farm Stay; and all of the State Forests
Great Lakes Shire Council	Lakes; rivers; beaches; and forests
Lake Macquarie City Council	Lake activities; Watagan Mountains; beaches; active and passive recreation
Maitland City Council	Historic Morpeth; Walka Water Works; Hunter Valley Steamfest; other events/festivals; Tocal Agricultural College; and the former Maitland Gaol
Merriwa Shire Council	National Park; The Drip; The Battery; the River Walk; and fresh air and open spaces
Murrurundi Shire Council	Scenic attractions and historical buildings
Muswellbrook Shire Council	Wineries; water recreation; national parks
Newcastle City Council	Beaches; Queens Wharf and harbour foreshore; Blackbutt Reserve; Shortland Wetlands; and art galleries
Port Stephens Shire Council	Natural attractions; Toboggan Hill Park; Fighter World; Hunter Region Botanical Gardens; Dolphin Cruises; fishing competitions; and Oakvale Farm
Scone Shire Council	Lake Glenbawn; Burning Mountain; horse studs; Barrington Tops; and national parks
Singleton Shire Council	Vineyards; Army base and museum; Lake St Clair; historical homes; forest region; Wine and Roses Festival; and national parks

The above information shows the broad range of tourist attraction of the region. From those listed, it is evident that there are extensive opportunities for eco-tourism throughout the region. By their nature, they are not limited to only one sector of the tourist market.



## **The Benefits of Cycling to the Community**

In his opening speech for the February launch of the Federal Government's "Australia Cycling - The National Strategy 1999 - 2004", The Hon. John Anderson MP, Minister for Transport and Regional Services made the following comment:

*" An increase in the amount of safe cycling in our communities will benefit us all. An increase in cycling will improve transport access for many Australians, increase levels of individual health, and reduce greenhouse emissions, air pollution and congestion. All members of the community will benefit from lower health costs in the community, less traffic on our roads and cleaner air....."*

*"Cycling can also improve transport availability and options to Australians who would not otherwise be able to travel, or travel as far, independently. Replacing short to medium length trips by car with trips by bicycle will produce significant savings to the individual in transport costs, and can complement public transport systems, thereby increasing catchments for existing services."*

### **HEALTH**

There are enormous personal health benefits to be gained from the exercise involved in either walking or riding a bike regularly. Cardiovascular and respiratory fitness are greatly enhanced by riding a bike, which also improves strength in major muscle groups. It is well recognised that joint damage often occurs from the impact entailed in habitual jogging, whereas the same exercise benefits can be gained from cycling, where its smooth non-jarring action does not cause joint injury. A graduated bicycle based exercise program can be beneficial for arthritis sufferers.

Cycling also offers significant health benefits in a time efficient manner. It enables people to exercise while transporting themselves to their destination. It can help to

reduce cholesterol levels and blood pressure. It has been stated that *"the National Heart Foundation estimates that about half of the people taking drugs for high blood pressure would not require drug treatment if they had 20-30 minutes of moderate exercise most days."*

Cyclists can ride as slowly, or as hard and fast as they choose to suit their own level of fitness. It is known that regular exercise reduces the risks of heart disease and strokes, and if more people are encouraged to ride bicycles, both the individual and the community will benefit from the improved fitness levels of its population; with the corresponding reduction in health costs. It is well documented that regular physical exercise has significant beneficial effects in stress reduction - a growing concern in today's high pressure workplace.

An increasing number of people have embraced the bicycle as an enjoyable cheap means of improving their physical fitness and overall wellbeing.

### **ECONOMIC**

In his presentation at the VeloZity Conference in Adelaide earlier this year, Associate Professor Harry Owen from Flinders University in South Australia provided the following insight into the cost of the medical implications relating to the lack of exercise:

In 1997 a report called "The Global Burden of Disease" was published. The World Health Organisation and the World Bank jointly commissioned the Harvard School of Public Health to report objectively on health on the planet. Its projections suggest that by 2020 the five diseases with the greatest impact on society will be:

Rank in 2020	Disease	Rank in 1990
1	Ischaemic heart disease	(5)
2	Unipolar major depression	(4)
3	Road traffic accidents	(9)
4	Cerebrovascular disease	(6)
5	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	(12)

The incidence of all of these diseases can be reduced through increased exercise facilitated by the implementation of the proposals in this submission. This would enable funding for the health budgets to be either reduced in real terms or re-directed to other problem areas within the health sphere.

Dr Owen further stated that *"in 1993, a technical paper on the economic value of exercise was published by the Australian Government. In this paper the value of some important benefits of regular exercise (heart disease, low back pain, absenteeism and increased productivity) were estimated and the costs injury and death were then deducted. From this it was calculated that the net benefit for every 10% increase in the population undertaking regular physical activity was AUD\$590 million dollars pa (note this is in 1983 dollars).*

***The net benefit (\$millions) of encouraging involvement in regular physical activity***

	<b>% community involvement</b>			
	<b>10%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>40%</b>
Benefits	651.4	1,302.8	1,954.2	2,605.6
Costs	61.2	122.4	183.6	244.8
<b>TOTAL BENEFIT</b>	<b>\$590.2</b>	<b>\$1,180.4</b>	<b>\$1,770.6</b>	<b>\$2,360.8</b>

As can be seen by the above information, the economic benefits to the whole of the community due to increased exercise are quite substantial. Cycling is one component for exercise that has added benefits in other areas.

The perception that motorists pay for the costs of motoring is widespread. However, in a recent study in the UK by the British Lung Foundation, they reported that motorists only pay about a third of the total cost to the community of the operation of the car. This situation would be similar in Australia when including the costs of accidents, reduced health and fitness, environmental destruction through greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants, land degradation caused by road construction, etc. From this it can be seen

that the majority of the cost of the motor vehicle is significantly borne by the taxpayer generally, rather than the user - a trend that needs to be reversed if our quality of life and economy is not to suffer. By reducing our use of the motor car as a means of transport, the amount of taxpayer subsidies spent on its support as an environmentally unfriendly means of transport would be able to be reduced.

Other non-health related economic benefits are:

- ❖ By replacing the car for some or all personal transport requirements by alternate environmentally friendly methods, there will be a reduction in the use of oils. As our domestic supply of oil diminishes, unless there is a reduction in its usage, we will be faced with more imports resulting in increases in our Balance of Payments deficit.
- ❖ It has been said that the average household spends over \$100 per week on transport using the family car. If cycling is used to replace some of these car journeys, there is an immediate increase in discretionary disposable income. This available income is more likely to remain within the local economy rather than to fill the pockets of the non-local providers, such as the overseas owned multi-national oil refining companies.
- ❖ Bicycle tourism tends to retain tourist expenditure within the regions visited. This is due to a large proportion of an eco-tourist's expenses being food and accommodation related. They also tend to spend their money on locally made or value added produce.
- ❖ By constructing facilities for cycle tourists, it offers the same benefits to the local residents. If it is made easier for them to cycle to a local supplier than it is to travel to a regional shopping centre by car, further cash will remain within the local economy. It would also be used for commuting and recreational cycling, creating an ownership of the facility by the local population.

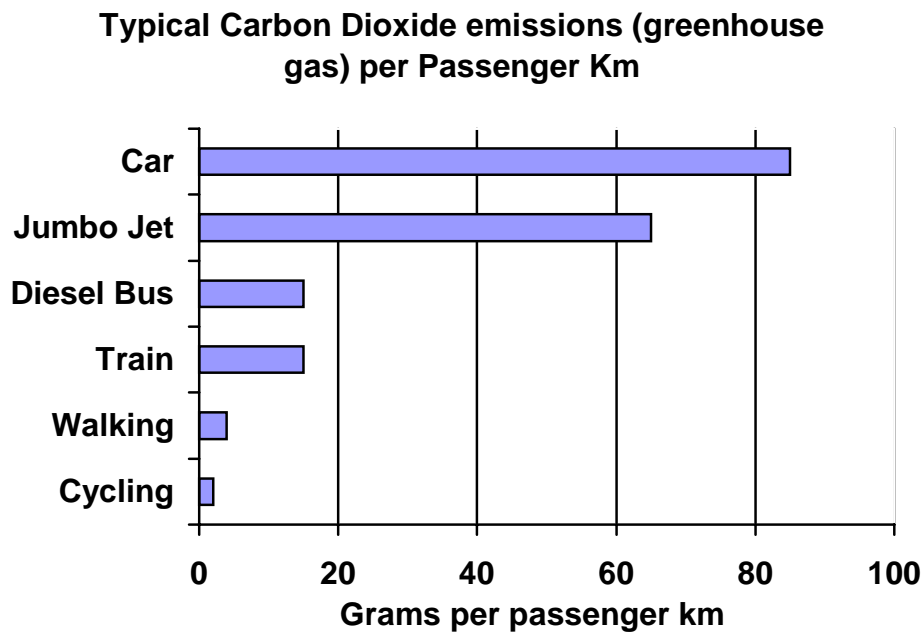
- ❖ Our country cannot sustain the ever increasing construction costs of \$40 million per km of inner city freeway or the \$5 million for each km of country highway (1992 costs). The use of integrated regional cycleways and public transport hubs will help to reduce this burden.
  
- ❖ Cycleways do not require huge multi million dollar community investments in paving and parking stations. As they are low impact paths, they require very little maintenance when properly constructed.
  
- ❖ The average distance travelled to work by Australian motorists is only 14 kms. The changes in bicycle technology during the last ten years have made such distances readily able to be travelled on a bicycle by much of the workforce. Many people have indicated that the main deterrent for them to cycle has been the lack of safe cycling facilities. Riding on the roads in their present form is considered to be too dangerous by many potential cyclists. Provision of more, safer on and off-road routes would re-open the prospect of commuting to work to many more people in this region, thereby reducing the number of cars on the road. This increased utilisation of bicycles for both transport and recreation has been evidenced in many of the Councils' areas where new cycleways have been constructed.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

The increasing use of the motor vehicle is adding to the pollution within our region. Notice should be taken of the already alarming problems being experienced in Sydney. Its population has been asked not to use their vehicles at times when climatic conditions prevent the smog pall from dissipating. This mirrors overseas experiences, and many foreign countries are planning to reduce reliance upon the car by enforcing and encouraging the use of alternative means of transport - such the bicycle. In some European cities, the smog from motor vehicles is causing damage to their heritage buildings. In Vienna, in an effort to arrest this problem, motor vehicle traffic is being

removed from certain historic sections of their city and replaced by bicycles. This is because the bicycle offers an ecologically sustainable means of transport.

The following graph was provided by Alan Parker, Secretary of the Town and Country Planning Association. It shows the relative greenhouse gas emissions of the various transport options.



Cycling also provides other environmental benefits.

- ❖ It offers an almost silent means of transport thereby reducing noise pollution.
- ❖ It requires far less space when compared to motor vehicle transport. In urban areas, roads, parking, etc for cars can take up to 1/3 of the available land space.
- ❖ It uses renewable energy sources.
- ❖ Oil and other residues dripped onto roads by cars are no longer present in such volume, and consequently there is a reduction in the pollution of waterways.

### **OTHER BENEFITS**

- ❖ The provision of more and better cycling facilities will help to make a significant reduction in the number of potential bicycle/motor vehicle confrontations.
- ❖ The provision of cycleways for children to enable them to use bicycles as a means of transport has a number of benefits. It reduces the need for "Mum's Taxi" to be used for every trip to any activity. This increases the free time for parents, and reduces travelling costs. By gaining road user experience from an early age, it can help in later life as a motorist.
- ❖ Properly planned cycleways linking to other modes of transport provide opportunities to use a more efficient transport structure utilising a number of alternatives to enable door-to-door travel.
- ❖ The Hunter Region has all of the skill structure necessary to construct cycleway infrastructures. Much of the work to be done lends itself to being done by unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Opportunities exist to employ unemployed and "work for the dole" workers on such projects. This helps to expand their skills and engenders pride in the work done and ownership of the facilities created.
- ❖ In many areas, much of the bicycle touring infrastructure can be achieved with minimal expenditure.

## **The Opportunities to Increase Cycling in the Hunter Region by a More Effective Infrastructure for Cycling**

### **INTERSECTIONS**

Many car/bicycle confrontations occur at intersections. This is due to intersections being constructed in a manner which is unsafe for cyclists.

### **ROUNDAABOUTS**

This type of intersection is particularly dangerous for cyclists due to:

- ❖ motorists cutting corners;
- ❖ high entry and exit speeds of motor vehicles;
- ❖ motorists focusing on what is occurring to their right and not paying attention to what may be happening directly in front of them, or to their left, as they sweep left through the roundabout. In most cases, a cyclist will be in the left lane or to the left of traffic in the roundabout; and
- ❖ no allowance is made for the slower speed of cyclists who may wish to turn right at the roundabout. Right turns in a multi-lane roundabout are extremely dangerous due to this factor and this is compounded by the need to cross lanes of traffic that are often fast flowing.

Better designs for roundabouts need to be developed and constructed that reduce the entry and exit speed of motor vehicles to 40kph. They must be designed to provide a safer crossing environment for both cyclists and pedestrians.

### **S-LANES**

These lanes are used to make it safer for motor vehicles turning right at an intersection. They have the undesirable effect of moving traffic to the left side of the road creating squeeze points for cyclists. It is not uncommon for cycle lanes to end abruptly when approaching one of these intersections. They force cyclists into a higher speed traffic



lane creating potential motor vehicle/bicycle confrontation situations. The use of these traffic lanes needs to be reviewed and a safer alternative introduced.

### **TRAFFIC LIGHTS**

Traffic lights offer the safest option for cyclists at intersections. Where bicycle traffic warrants their use, sensors for the bicycle lane traffic should be installed to enable a cyclist to activate the traffic lights.

### **PRIMARY ROADS**

Many of the primary roads in the region do not have marked road shoulders that enable cyclists to travel safely along the route, or alternatively, have little or no shoulder that is able to be used for cycling. This includes the National Highways. The high speed of traffic along these roads is not conducive to providing a safe cycling environment.

To help to increase cycling safety, all primary arterial roads should:

- ❖ Have road shoulders wide enough to comply with, and be marked in accordance to, Austroads 14. This has been a request from both the cycling and road transport bodies for some time. It provides an added benefit of prolonging the life of the roads by keeping traffic away from the weaker edges and reducing road deterioration due to water damage.
- ❖ Shoulder lanes should be of the same surface material as that used on the road proper.
- ❖ Where different road surfaces meet, the transition from one surface to the other needs to be smooth, not stepped, as is often the case now. This stepping creates a major hazard to cyclists, as it can cause a cyclist to be thrown from their bike, possibly into the path of oncoming traffic.

- ❖ All drainage grates must be of a type that have their primary bars running at right angles to the flow of traffic. This will help to prevent a cyclist's wheel from becoming lodged between the bars resulting in them being thrown from their bike.

### **SECONDARY ROADS**

Secondary roads are considered to be those where there are no lane markings at all. They tend to be poorly mapped with inadequate signposting. Improved signage, particularly warning motorists of the presence of cyclists, would be of benefit in these areas. Traffic flow is usually light, but travelling at speed. It takes considerable time and effort to plan a good bicycle tour, and the absence of detailed information on these roads can be a disincentive for any cyclist to visit an area.

### **SUBURBAN ROADS**

1. Where it has not already been achieved, speed limits on suburban roads need to be reduced to 40-50kph. This will help to:
  - 1.1. reduce the number of accidents;
  - 1.2. reduce number of deaths and the severity of injuries sustained by motorists, pedestrians and cyclists in accidents involving motor vehicles;
  - 1.3. reduce fuel consumption of motor vehicles with the flow-on benefit of reducing the need for imported oil;
  - 1.4. reduce the cost of motor vehicle collision repairs; and to
  - 1.5. increase the use of bicycles as a means of transport by all ages of the community.
2. Adequate safe provision for cyclists needs to be made when constructing intersections, particularly roundabouts.
3. Residential, industrial and commercial developments must be required to cater for cycling as a means of transport. This includes

- 3.1. linking with appropriate traffic interchanges, either as on-road or off-road cycleways;
  - 3.2. secure bicycle parking; and
  - 3.3. shower and changeroom facilities at industrial and commercial developments.
4. Those roads designated as cycle routes should be clearly marked on the road and comply with Austroads 14.

### **CLOSED RAILWAY LINES**

This region has been left with a legacy of many privately owned railway lines that have been closed when the mines that they supported were shut down. Their gentle gradient provides an easy route for cyclists. Their earthworks have been done, sometimes, up to 100 years ago, and offer a readymade bed for cycleways. Limited works are required to regenerate them and make them operational as a cycling facility. Some bridges may need to be rebuilt or rejuvenated.

One excellent example of this opportunity is the former Adamstown to Belmont coal line - near Newcastle - which was built in the late 1800's and subsequently closed to rail transport in 1991. It was then purchased by the two councils adjoining the line. It is their intention to make its 15.5kms an arterial cycleway for the population on the eastern side of Lake Macquarie to link with the existing cycleways in Newcastle. It is also intended that this route will form an important link in the proposed NSW Coastline Cycle Route between the Queensland and Victorian borders discussed later in this section. Funding for this development is causing the biggest delay in its completion. Newcastle City Council is a joint owner with Lake Macquarie City Council and each must contribute the same amount to any work done on this project. This is creating major problems in progressing this development.

Similar lines exist around Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Lake Macquarie, Maitland and Singleton. Their conversion to cycleways would benefit their respective communities.

Conversions of this type are already successfully under way in Victoria and Western Australia, while in USA and Canada, millions of dollars are being spent to achieve similar results for thousands of kilometres of former rail beds. These countries have realised the benefits of cycle transport and eco-tourism.

These off-road paths can provide scenic routes to link with other major on-road and off-road regional routes.

### **OPERATIONAL RAILWAY LINES**

Operational railway lines also offer a ready means for providing off-road cycling facilities. By constructing cycleways within the railway easement, the benefits of the shallow gradients required by rail transport can also be enjoyed by the cycling fraternity. They can be built adjacent to the track maintenance roads. This type of arrangement is now under negotiation in Sydney.

### **BRIDGES**

To allow cyclists and walkers to have an unimpeded journey, it is vital that disused road and rail bridges be maintained as thoroughfares.

Cyclists are effected by narrow bridges, poor approaches to bridges and dangers of "pick-a-plank" bridges. The latter has the planking running parallel with the cyclist, rather than at right angles to their path. This has the potential to create fatal situations. If a cyclist's wheel gets caught between the planks, they can be thrown to the roadway, possibly into the path of other traffic. A number of these "pick-a-plank" bridges exist in this region. In all of the above cases, a safe means of crossing for cyclists is necessary.

### **OFF-ROAD CYCLEWAYS**

Off-road cycleways provide an ideal safe environment for cyclists. However, such facilities are not always available or alternate routes provide better coverage of the area.

They are often built as feeders for school children, but they should also be constructed as arterial feeder routes in urban development. This region is poorly served by off-road cycleways as the following table shows:

<b>Local Government Area</b>	<b>Kms of Off-Road Cycleways</b>	<b>Kms of On-Road Cycleways (not H/way)</b>	<b>No. of Education Institutions</b>	<b>3 Years Council Spending on C/ways (\$'000)</b>
Cessnock City Council	5	13	31	\$150
Dungog Shire Council	1	-	14	\$40
Gloucester Shire Council	-	-	5	-
Great Lakes Shire Council	13	7	13	\$230
Lake Macquarie City Council	36	44	76	\$931
Maitland City Council	5	22	34	\$184
Merriwa Shire Council	1	-	3	\$30
Murrurundi Shire Council	-	-	3	-
Muswellbrook Shire Council	4	2	9	\$45
Newcastle City Council	17	53	70	\$307
Port Stephens Shire Council	28	N/a	N/a	\$219
Scone Shire Council	4	-	10	\$80
Singleton Shire Council	8	-	10	\$37

A typical off-road cycleway costs around \$100k per kilometre to construct. The above table shows that the funding of the construction of cycleways during the last 3 years by the above Councils has been as minimal. Lake Macquarie's contribution of over \$900k was effected by significant reclamation and earthworks required in a 1.5 - 2km section of a shared pedestrian/cycleway constructed around the Lake foreshore.

## **INTERMODAL TRANSPORT LINKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **RAIL TRANSPORT**

The progressive reduction in regional train services has caused rail travel by regional Australia to move in a downward spiral. If services are not frequent enough for the passengers, they find alternate means of transport - usually by car. When they travel by

car, there is a tendency to utilise the major regional centres for other spending. This further erodes the economies in the smaller rural areas.

Not only have rail services been reduced, but it is often difficult to take bicycles on the remaining links. Many trains are now restricted to carrying only two single bikes. Tandems, which are becoming more popular, are unlikely to be carried at all. These restrictions create problems with people living in outlying towns. This is particularly so in the Hunter Valley where people travel from Dungog, Scone, Maitland and Morisset by train, either to work or University. The bicycle offers them an efficient, economical means of door-to-door travel when linked with rail transport.

The major intercity trains in NSW, being the XPT, will only carry 2 boxed bicycles that must be booked in at the time of purchasing the passenger ticket. This contrasts to the experience with the comparable New Zealand intercity passenger trains. They have a small goods-van attached to the train and it is capable of carrying all passengers' luggage, regardless of whether it is bicycles, surfboards, skis or conventional baggage - all in a small country where tourists are welcomed and encouraged.

More facilities need to be introduced on trains to encourage this mixed mode of train/bicycle transport. European cities often have sections of their trains devoted to bicycles and cyclists - they may be just an area with no seats and some hooks to hang bikes during transit, while the owners stand to their destination.

Until several months ago, the city of Cessnock had an operational rail coal link to Newcastle, but no rail passenger service. It was closed in 1972. This means that all commuters from the Pokolbin, Cessnock, Neath, Weston and Kurri Kurri catchment travel down a single, poor quality regional road to get to Newcastle or Maitland. The re-introduction of a regular rail passenger service would:

- ❖ help to reduce road traffic between Cessnock, Maitland and Newcastle;
- ❖ enable commuters to use a train/cycle means of transport; and

- ❖ provide an economical means of transport to the 25%+ of youth unemployed in the area and to enable them to seek work further afield.

These interchanges should also provide secure bicycle parking to accommodate the commuting passengers. In NSW, Bicycle NSW is renting enclosed bike lockers at railway stations and ferry terminals in areas of high commuting.

### **BUSES - PUBLIC AND PRIVATE**

For inter region transport, road coaches offer a further alternative to rail travel. However, in most cases, bicycles are only carried at the driver's discretion - and some drivers do not exercise their discretion. Suburban and interurban buses provide no facilities to carry bicycles. In some overseas countries, such as USA, buses are now appearing with bike racks at the front or rear to encourage intermodal transportation. . Sydney buses are now providing spring-loaded seats in some buses to enable them to be used by people in wheelchairs. If the area is not being used by a disabled person, the spring-loaded seat can be pulled down and used by another passenger. The same principle could be adopted to allow bicycles on buses.

### **FERRIES**

Both vehicular and passenger ferries should be equipped to carry bicycles in a manner that is safe for all passengers and does not damage bicycles. Secure bike parking should be provided at these terminals where commuters require storage.

### **Air Transport**

The size of RPT aircraft used in the region precludes the carriage of bicycles as accompanied passenger luggage. In some instances, it may not be able to be carried by air from that airport.

### **WATER PIPELINE RESERVES**

There are a number of water catchment reserves in the Hunter, but principally Glenbawn Dam, Glennies Creek Dam, Lostock Dam, Chichester Dam, Grahamstown Dam and the Tomago sandbeds. A number of these have pipelines feeding to urban development. While not all of the terrain traversed by these pipelines is bicycle friendly, there are large sections adjacent to these pipelines that could be economically utilised to provide safe off-road cycling. The nature of the pipeline is such that it is arterial, therefore providing an opportunity for main arterial cycleways.

### **HIGH VOLTAGE POWERLINE RESERVES**

These reserves offer similar benefits to water pipeline reserves, although they tend to offer less cycle friendly terrain than the pipeline routes.

### **CONVICT BUILT GREAT NORTH ROAD**

This road was built using convict labour between 1826 and 1834 to link the Hunter Valley with Sydney. It started at Five Dock in Sydney and went west to Parramatta, then north to Wisemans Ferry and through National Parklands to Wollombi where it branched to Singleton in the north, and Cessnock, Maitland and Newcastle to the east. Much of it is still in use today, but it has been covered by bitumen. There are other sections that have deteriorated to its current level of decay through years of neglect.

There are 22 organisations that have taken responsibility for the management of this unique piece of Australian heritage. Interestingly, currently Cessnock City Council is utilising volunteer labour from one of the local correctional centres to restore and maintain some of the significant sites that are within its boundaries.

An investment of funds on this old road to restore and upgrade it would provide an historic eco-tourist opportunity for cyclists and walkers along its length, much as the Great North Walk does for walkers. Image being able to ride along a road that had been originally made by hand nearly 170 years ago through National Parks to view sandstone



parapets and bridges that had been hewn from local rock by convict labour! Would that have national and international tourist appeal?

### **NSW COASTLINE CYCLEWAY**

In 1994, Elias Duek-Cohen, formerly Associate Professor at the School of Town Planning at the University of NSW, commenced an investigation into the feasibility of a possible 1,500km cycling route along the coastline of NSW from the Queensland to Victorian border. His study was commissioned by the RTA, and it showed the extent of the work that would be required to bring it to fruition. For the Hunter Region, councils from Gosford, Wyong, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Great Lakes and Greater Taree were involved.

It is recognised that this is the one of the most frequently used routes for cycle tourists, particularly those from overseas, who use it to cycle from Cairns to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and beyond. The high population density along the coastal strip would also achieve significant benefits from its final construction. Currently work is progressing slowly towards its construction and completion of its many missing links.

NCM believes that by providing opportunities for eco-tourist travel into the Hunter Region, its construction will be further enhanced.

### **SIGNPOSTING ROUTES**

The signposting of cycle routes is one of the nation's best kept secrets. There is little signage to indicate the presence of cycleways, particularly off-road routes. There is no signage to show where the cycleways lead to. By indicating the presence of cycleways, whether they be on or off-road routes, it will encourage tourism and local use.

In order to make signage meaningful, it must be of a national standard using symbols that would be recognised by intra and inter state tourists as well as overseas visitors.

The manufacture of these signs is something that could be done locally, perhaps in one of a number of the local correctional centres. Perhaps trusted inmates or people on "work for the dole" schemes could be utilised to erect and install the signs.

### **MAPPING OF ROUTES**

Unfortunately, experience has shown that many bicycle routes are mapped and planned by people who have little or no experience on bicycles. This has resulted in maps showing roads/paths crossing steep hills or using dangerous and busy roads as a cycling route when better less direct alternatives may be available.

The cycling routes should be planned by local cycling organisations, in conjunction with their local councils. From there, the maps should be prepared and used as the basis for the signage and any necessary road works required on the routes designated.

In NSW, the RTA has embarked on a project of preparing maps of its regions for cyclists. While lacking the quality and detail shown on overseas cycling maps, they are an attempt to address the lack of cycle route information.

Bicycle maps should cater for the tourist as well as the commuting or recreational cyclist. When a touring cyclist examines a map, in addition to the distances and tourist information, they also need to know information about the terrain. If the terrain is hilly with a lot of steep ascents, they won't be able to travel as far in a day as they would if it was gently undulating. This sort of information is necessary in order to plan overnight accommodation stays and the distances to be travelled each day.

### **INTERNET WEBSITE FOR BICYCLE ECO-TOURISM**

The internet is emerging as a major source of information for bicycle tourists. A large number of sites exist for commercial bicycle tour operators from around the world. Probably one of the best government bicycle tourism sites is that of the British Touring Association. It provides details of tourist cycling routes and opportunities throughout the

UK, and it can be found at [www.visitbritain.com/activities/cycling/](http://www.visitbritain.com/activities/cycling/). By constructing and continually updating a local site for the Hunter Region as a link to an Australian national cycle touring site, it will provide current information to local, intrastate, interstate and international cycle tourists. The creation and maintenance of such a website will also add to the local employment in a small way.

It should contain:

- ❖ downloadable maps of cycle routes showing traffic stress levels, a guide to the terrain along the route and the nature of the road surfaces;
- ❖ details of permanent tourist attractions;
- ❖ dates of planned festivals and events - due to the time required to plan a bicycle tour, it would be helpful to show events up to 18 months ahead;
- ❖ information on matters that are of particular interest to cyclists - such as the availability of food and accommodation;
- ❖ e-mail addresses with phone and fax numbers for accommodation together with current indicative prices; and
- ❖ e-mail addresses with phone and fax numbers and addresses of Tourist Information Centres.

By providing this information, it will help to make it easier for a bicycle tourist to plan their trip. This will create a more positive and encouraging experience for them to visit the Hunter Region, even before they have started their trip.

## **How Increased Cycling will provide Development and Employment in the Hunter Region**

### **CONSTRUCTION**

The Hunter Region has all of the skill structure necessary to construct cycleway infrastructures. Much of the work to be done lends itself to being done by unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Opportunities exist to utilise unemployed and "work for the dole" workers on such projects. This would help to expand their skills and engender pride in the work done and ownership of the facilities created.

If the expected boom/bust economic situation occurs following the Olympic Games next year, there will be a significant increase in unemployment, not only in Sydney, but in the neighbouring regions as well. Much of the displaced workforce will belong to the civil construction industry, and their skills will complement those of the existing workforce.

The major areas of construction are:

- ❖ improving/increasing the width of road shoulders;
- ❖ road marking of road shoulders and for designated cycle lanes;
- ❖ design and building of off-road cycleways;
- ❖ rejuvenation of Great North Convict Road;
- ❖ construction of NSW Coastline Cycleway;
- ❖ design and manufacture improvements for trains, buses and ferries to allow carriage of bicycles;
- ❖ provide secure bike parking in commercial areas and at transport interchanges;
- ❖ mapping and signposting the various routes; and finally,
- ❖ the advertising and promotion of the new or enhanced facilities.

10 of the 13 Councils that have contributed information for this submission have bicycle plans at various stages of revision. After consultation with the local Bicycle User Groups

(BUG's), these bicycle plans could be used as a basis for planning the regional network. All of this work can be done by local companies employing local staff. It should be contracted out to them so that the money remains within the local Hunter Regional economy.

### **TOURISM**

Due to its low capital outlay and minimal ongoing costs in the maintenance of its infrastructure, bicycle touring can provide a significant net cash inflow to a region. As cyclists do not incur similar travel costs to motorists for fuel, their disposable income can actually be spent on food, accommodation, consumer goods and value added items from the local community.

It should be understood that the perception that the bicycle is a poor man's transport is totally wrong. The experience of Newcastle Cycleways Movement is directly contrary to that, with the affluence of most cycle tourists covering the broad economic spectrum, but with a tendency towards the average income level. From this observation, we believe that, in most cases, cycle tourists have a disposable holiday allowance that would be equal to that of car travellers.

Research by a number of tourist organisations has shown that backpackers (including cyclists) spend less per day than conventional tourists. However, backpackers tend to stay longer in the country than more conventional tourists and therefore the amount that they spend overall is higher. They also tend to stay longer in places that appeal to them.

Tourism already is a major contributor to the economy of the Hunter Valley. The councils of the region believe that it bolsters their economies by:

<b>Local Government Area</b>	<b>\$M from Tourism p.a.</b>
Cessnock City Council	200
Dungog Shire Council	16
Gloucester Shire Council	N/a

<b>Local Government Area</b>	<b>\$M from Tourism p.a.</b>
Great Lakes Shire Council	150
Lake Macquarie City Council	200
Maitland City Council	54
Merriwa Shire Council	N/a
Murrurundi Shire Council	N/a
Muswellbrook Shire Council	N/a
Newcastle City Council	N/a
Port Stephens Shire Council	155
Scone Shire Council	N/a
Singleton Shire Council	34

This tourist route of the Hunter Region would also provide an opportunity for international cyclists to be actively encouraged to visit inland beyond the coastal strip. Currently, many arrive in Cairns and ride down to Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide via the Pacific Highway.

Some regions in our country have recognised the benefits in attracting eco-tourism, and more particularly, cycling, for the benefits of their local economies. To name some of these:

- ❖ touring cyclists are welcomed throughout Tasmania;
- ❖ The Great Ocean Road is recognised as a jewel in Australian bicycle touring;
- ❖ south-west of Western Australia has extensive bicycle touring maps available indicating cycling facilities and tourist attractions between Perth, Margaret River and Walpole. This, along with the conversion of closed railway beds to hard packed gravel cycleways extending for several hundred kilometres, is helping to further promote bicycle touring to this area; and
- ❖ the Mawson Trail in South Australia.

## **BICYCLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE**

### ***LOCAL ACTIVITIES***

Newcastle Cycleways Movement conducts bicycle tours in the lower Hunter Region almost every weekend. They range from half-day trips to 4 day long weekend tours. A number of other non-profit and commercial bicycle tour operators also have regular tours through the Hunter at various times of the year, but usually on weekends or at holiday periods.

### ***NEW ZEALAND TOURISM***

New Zealand offers extensive touring opportunities for cyclists. During the summer season, many cyclists can be seen on both islands. Most of their arterial roads are suitable for cycling due to their width and low volume of traffic. The ferry, intercity bus, rail and air transport systems all cater for cyclists. Hostel and camping accommodation caters very well for backpackers, cyclists and other eco-tourists. Most of them provide communal kitchens and refrigeration facilities. This helps to reduce the equipment needed to be carried by a bicycle tourist. Better facilities are encouraging more visitors.

### ***EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES***

The extensive network of cycling facilities throughout Europe attract visitors from all over the world. They range from off-road cycleways to the use of minor well maintained, cycle friendly roads. The routes are constructed to benefit local residents as well as visitors to the community. They provide integrated networks with other modes of transport as well as linking the other regional cycleways to one another. Thousands of people use these facilities for touring each day.

Their routes are clearly marked and well mapped. Accommodation is extensive and usually readily available, with stays at B&B's adding further cultural enrichment to these tours by living more closely with their people.

### ***UNITED KINGDOM***

Sustrans is a civil engineering charity which designs and builds routes for cyclists, walkers and people with disabilities. It has significant support from the UK government. It is in the process of the construction of an 11,000kms National Cycle Network that will pass within 3kms of over 20 million residents of the UK. In 1995, it received a pledge of £42.5 million from lotteries that was to be matched from other sources to enable construction to begin. The network is expected to be completed by 2005.

It has been estimated that the Network will carry over 100 million journeys per annum when completed, with a high proportion of cycle trips being journeys that had not previously been made by bicycle.

This indicates the commitment of the UK and its government to providing tourist opportunities as well as community facilities for an environmentally sustainable means of transport.

### ***NORTH AMERICAN CYCLING***

There are a number of major cycling routes within USA. There are 3 - 4 recognised transcontinental routes that go west/east, with a number running north/south. Probably the most popular is the Pacific Coast Cycle Route. It extends from Vancouver in Canada to the Mexican border. Much of it has been constructed to cater for cycle touring. The prevailing winds tend to be from north or north-west resulting in most cycling tours travelling south with the prevailing winds. Roads have had their south bound lanes made wider to cater for this additional traffic flow. Camping areas have been constructed along its length only for the use of cyclists and walkers. In other areas, the USA government has commenced major cycleway construction, not only to cater for the tourist, but to also provide benefits to the local community. Many former railway beds are being utilised to provide low gradient off-road links between cities.

In Quebec, a Canadian province as large as Queensland, La Route Verte is a linked integration of over 800kms of country roads, abandoned railway tracks, river paths and



paved road shoulders on more major roads. During the summer, 5 million of the Quebec population of 7 million people ride their bicycles along this route. It is expected that by 2005, over 3,500kms of linked cycling paths will be completed, leaving only a short section to be constructed for the final link between Quebec's largest city - Montreal - and its capital, Quebec City. This is typical of development occurring in Canada.

### **CHANGE IN DISPOSABLE INCOME**

By changing from petrol power to pedal power, there can be a significant increase in discretionary disposable income. Often the major costs of ownership of a motor vehicle - such as loan repayments, registration and insurance, fuel, etc. - are paid to "out-of-town" organisations. It is more likely that this additional discretionary income will be spent within the local area, thereby benefiting a wider range of the community and bolstering the local economy.

This change can only occur if people believe that it is safe and easy for them to ride bicycles to their intended destinations.

### **TRANSPORT FOR LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC REGIONS**

By the construction of cycleways, those in lower socio-economic situations will be more encouraged to ride bicycles as a safe and economical means of transport. In the case of the unemployed, they offer an opportunity to extend the range of job search activities by providing easy and safe transport corridors. Overseas studies are beginning to show that the greater the presence of people in the streets (not in cars), there is less likelihood of crime.

## **How the Federal Government can Help**

### **"AUSTRALIA CYCLING -THE NATIONAL STRATEGY 1999-2004"**

Copies of this Federal Government's strategic document can be obtained by § 1800 055 533 or (08) 8343 2752 or by forwarding your postal details to the following E-mail address [austcycling@roads.sa.gov.au](mailto:austcycling@roads.sa.gov.au).

When The Hon John Anderson MP, Minister for Transport and Regional Services, launched this Government's bicycling strategic plan on February 19, 1999 in Adelaide, he made the following statements:

*"The first objective provides the operational framework for the strategy. The strategy is underpinned by the development and maintenance of partnerships between the three spheres of government, industry, cycling and other non-government organisations and the community. By establishing these partnerships, the strategy will be able to be implemented effectively.*

*"The second objective seeks to integrate cycling into the policy and planning process. For the impediments to cycling to be overcome, cycling must be integrated into the policies and plans of organisations involved in transport, health, environment, urban development, tourism, and recreation. Cycling can contribute positively to the goals of these policies.*

*"Objective three is about putting in place an integrated system of cycling facilities to increase bicycle use. This system should include a network of on and off road routes, end-of-trip facilities, maps, signage and convenient integration with public transport.*

*"The community must be confident that cycling is a safe choice for transport and recreation. Objective four seeks to continuously improve safety for cyclists. This means*

*increasing the awareness of all network users about safe behaviour and improving the physical cycling environment.*

*"Objective five seeks to promote the benefits of cycling to the community. Through promoting the benefits of cycling and making accurate information available, the Australian community will be able to place greater value on cycling.*

*Finally, objective six seeks to build cycling into education, training and professional development. This is an important step as it aims to influence the current users as well as decision makers of tomorrow.*

*"All these objectives are deliverable, and include clear targets, timeframes and responsibilities."*

The **ACTIVE** introduction and pursuit of these objectives will help to enable some of these proposals be achieved and implemented.

## **TAXATION OPPORTUNITIES**

### **TAXATION REBATES FOR CYCLING FACILITIES**

To enable organisations to quickly encourage the use of cycling as a means of transport for their workforce and tourists, taxation write offs in the year of expenditure should be given for the provision of cycling facilities. These should include, but not be limited to:

- ❖ construction of cycleways from public cycling routes to employer/tourist site;
- ❖ shower and change room facilities;
- ❖ secure bike racks of a particular standard as recommended by the Bicycle Federation of Australia;
- ❖ shelter sheds that are only used for safe bicycle storage; and
- ❖ secure bicycle lockers for visitors and staff.

This taxation concession would apply equally to workplace environments and tourist centres - including multi-story buildings, car parks, shopping centres, transport hubs and tourist attractions.

By adopting a concessional rebate using a similar arrangement to that for Research and Development, a deduction of 125% of the cost could be introduced to expedite the provision of these amenities. The cost to Taxation revenue for these benefits in the case of parking facilities would be small, as up to 20 bicycles can occupy the space of one car.

In the USA, employers in some cities are offering their employees financial incentives to ride bikes rather than to drive cars to work. It makes for fitter, healthier and less stressed employees, there is a reduction in greenhouse gases, and the company does not have to spend large amounts of money on car parks.

#### **FBT FOR EMPLOYEE AND VISITOR CAR PARKING**

It has been estimated that the motor vehicle infrastructure currently takes up to 33% of available urban land. In order to minimise this waste of our valuable land, incentives need to be created that will reduce the need for the use of such a large amount of space. Unfortunately, taxing users appears to provide the most effective way of doing this.

Essentially, current FBT laws do not provide for taxation of free parking of staff or visitors vehicles unless there is a commercial all day car park within a 1km radius. This could be modified so that FBT will be charged on all car park spaces at the current taxation rates except where there is a proportion of spaces allocated for bicycle parking. This could represent a ratio of not less than 1 bike park for every 9 cars. The secure, under cover bike park spaces and facilities should be in accordance with recommended criteria from the Bicycle Federation of Australia and proof of their continued cycle use would be required. Shower and change room facilities should be sufficient to cater for use by not less than 10% of the workforce in the case of workplace environments and

multi-storey buildings. Obviously, this recommendation would need to be fine tuned, but it should be done in conjunction with the stakeholders of the National Cycling Strategy.

The costs of introducing these bicycle parking facilities will be significantly cheaper than those required to cater for a similar number of cars.

**THE IMPACT OF GST**

The changes that will occur as a result of the introduction of GST are going to be significant on the transport and health economies.

The Benefits	The Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The removal of sales tax on motor vehicles will make them more affordable for many Australians.</li> <li>❖ It will help to reduce the age of the national car fleet.</li> <li>❖ A reduction in the age of the national car fleet will replace vehicles that are more polluting than the more recent models.</li> <li>❖ It will help to increase the profits of our overseas and overseas owned multi national motor vehicle manufacturers.</li> <li>❖ The elimination of taxes of road fuel will help to reduce road freight costs.</li> <li>❖ Price reduction in the cost of bicycles and their components.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ A reduction in the price of motor vehicles and fuel costs will encourage more people to abandon more environmentally sustainable public transport, walking and cycling.</li> <li>❖ More motor vehicles create an ever increasing demand on the public purse for high cost road construction and maintenance funding.</li> <li>❖ More of the population's disposable income will be spent on transport rather than utilising cost effective public transport, walking and cycling.</li> <li>❖ More motor vehicles will create more pollution, despite the newer national fleet being less polluting per passenger kilometre.</li> <li>❖ Road freight becomes more attractive than rail or shipping alternatives, adding to the infrastructure costs, pollution and road hazards.</li> <li>❖ Our country's Balance of Payments will be placed further in the red by the need to import additional oil to supplement our dwindling supplies to accommodate the</li> </ul>

The Benefits	The Cost
	<p>increased car usage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The increased profits to our overseas owned multi-national car and fuel companies will be sent to their overseas parents. This, together with further import of vehicles manufactured overseas, will also increase our Balance of Payments deficit. Added to that is the fact that little tax, if any, is paid on these profits to the Australian Government. Yet another opportunity to give away the farm!</li> <li>❖ By increasing the dependence on the car, there will be a further reduction in the overall health and fitness of the nation. Why would anyone promote poor health and low fitness?</li> <li>❖ Reduced health and fitness = increased costs in the health budget.</li> <li>❖ An increased volume of motor traffic will create chaos within major cities and erode the already deteriorating quality of life for our cities inhabitants.</li> </ul>

Dr Harry Owen from Flinders University has stated that *"currently Australia spends approximately AUD\$45 billion per annum (8.4% of GDP) on health..... Without a major change in health policy, health spending will increase over the next 30 years by AUD\$38 billion per annum to over 14% of GDP. This is unsustainable!"*

His comment does not take into consideration the increased dependency on cars for transport resulting from cheaper cars and its further effect on the reduction in the overall health of our nation. People must be encouraged to join in physical activities, and transport is an ideal opportunity to do this, whether it be by walking or cycling. Barriers to these healthy activities must not be put in the way of our community.

On balance, from the above information, it must be recognised that the impact of GST in its proposed form on both the health and transport economies of our nation is a potential disaster. This must not be allowed to happen.

### **FUNDING FOR PROVISION OF CYCLING FACILITIES**

As can be seen from the table shown on page 27, Councils within the region have not allocated sufficient funds for the provision of cycling facilities during the last 3 years. In order for this to happen, further funding is necessary from both State and Federal Governments.

In his opening address for the launch of "Australia Cycling - The National Strategy 1999 - 2004", the Minister for Transport and Regional Services indicated that the Commonwealth funding for National Highways and other roads of national importance *"amounts to some \$800 million per year, part of which goes on the provision of cycle facilities on these routes."* Clearly, from the lack of safe cycling facilities being provided on these National Highways, the proportion actually being allocated for cycling improvements is totally inadequate. Since the Federal Government's own 1993 investigations have shown that each 10% of community involvement in physical activity can represent a net annual benefit of \$590 million (1983 dollars), it is appropriate that funding for prevention of ill health is far more beneficial than funding for cures. In view of this, a significantly higher allocation of Federal funding for cycling facilities is required urgently to help reduce the long-term cost of ill health brought about by lack of physical exercise.

### **PROVISION FOR CYCLING FACILITIES IN ALL NEW PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS AS A GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENT**

Uniform standards for road and cycling facilities must be formulated for new developments to ensure that opportunities exist for increased utilisation of cycling and walking as a means of transport, not only in residential subdivisions, but also in industrial

estates and shopping centres. The current trend in residential subdivisions of narrow streets, with many cul-de-sacs, is offering no safe arterial routes for cycle use. Roads are often only barely wide enough for 2 cars to pass, and on-street parking is limited to wider streets. Recent experience in this region suggests that developments with this type of structure appear to be creating anti-social interaction. In an attempt to rectify some of this problem, houses are being bulldozed to provide through traffic facilities.

These developments must be able to provide safe links to existing cycling facilities as well as enhancing them. Safe, user friendly cycling links should be seen to be as important as the requirements to enable effective motor transport to operate within those subdivisions.

Facilities within shopping centres should provide for safe parking of bicycles, preferably by the provision of bicycle lockers or Bicycle Federation of Australia approved bicycle racks.



## **Recommendations**

1. That as a matter of urgency, the Federal Government actively pursue the implementation of "Australia Cycling - The National Strategy 1999-2004".
2. That the Federal Government increase funding to enable Local Government and State Government bodies to expedite the construction of cycleways and bicycle transport infrastructure.
3. That additional funding be allocated to the Hunter Region to enable this project to commence and be finalised by 2004.
4. That consideration be given to providing taxation incentives for organisations to provide for cycling facilities as a means of creating inducements for the development of a safe cycling environment that will encourage the workforce to cycle to work.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Australia Cycling -The National Strategy 1999-2004

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Hunter Regional Tourism Incorporated

Keay, Dr Colin - Newcastle Cycleways Movement - Vice President - Planning and Development

Murdoch, Barry - experienced international bicycle tourist with extensive knowledge of European cycle touring facilities

Newcastle Cycleways Movement Incorporated - "Adamstown - Belmont Shared Pedestrian/Cycleway - A "Rails to Trails" Conversion" - February 1996

Owen, Associate Professor Harry - MD FRCA FANZCA - Faculty of Health Sciences, the Flinders University of South Australia - "A Pedal a Day keeps the Doctor Away or What the "Health Industry" doesn't want you to know about Cycling" presented at VeloZity in Adelaide in February 1999

Parker, Alan - Secretary of the Town and Country Planning Association

Sustrans - UK civil engineering charity specialising sustainable transport modes