

## Cycling should be on transport, health and tourism agendas

**Rod Katz**

The recent qualitative research article by Greig<sup>1</sup> in the August 2003 issue of the *Journal* illustrates well the common themes about why people do not ride a bicycle. It follows a long line of qualitative studies into cycling from around the country.<sup>2-4</sup> The brief summary of the findings does not suggest anything particularly new has been detected about people's attitudes.

However, what is gratifying to see in this research, apart from its currency, is that it is being done as part of a specific program to increase levels of activity generally and cycling in particular. This program has been embraced in Western Australia initially as part of the transport agenda and now increasingly the health agenda. However, the health sector could be doing far more to support greater physical activity through cycling than it does.

Cycling has a much greater role in increasing activity than many would appreciate. It forms a major part of the spectrum of active travel for recreation, tourism and transport. All of these areas are of growing concern to health planners as well as professionals from other disciplines who have an interest in economic and social development.

Promoting cycling offers marketing opportunities to communities as well as advantages for locals from increased activity, greater equity of access, reduced negative externalities from motorised transport and improved general image. There are several centres around the country that are cottoning on to this and marketing themselves as cycling havens. These include Canberra, Wangarratta, Adelaide, Dungog and others and this is attracting residents and visitors alike. Anecdotally, medical staff are particularly likely to want to live in centres that have good conditions for cycling – this is a largely unappreciated benefit of providing cycling facilities.

Until we see more instances of inter-sectoral co-operation between the health, tourism and recreation and transport sectors we are unlikely to see much progress on increasing levels of so called 'incidental activity'. Hopefully, the current moves at federal and state level focusing on obesity will provide some impetus in this direction.

### References

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