



- ✓ Bring bike riders together
- ✓ Improve workplace facilities & promote cycling
- ✓ Share skills & knowledge
- ✓ Introduce more people to cycling





Cycling is a great way of getting fit while getting to work. Of course, not everyone has discovered the benefits of cycling to work yet, but this new guide from Bicycle Victoria will encourage people to start workplace Bicycle User Group help others and join the 20,000+ Victorians that ride to work on any given day.

There are many good reasons to ride to work:

- It increases your health and fitness
- It's a fun and social way to travel
- Cycling is often quicker than travelling by car
- It reduces congestion on our roads
- It's a great way to see more of your local area
- It's cheap
- It's much better for our environment than other forms of transport.

My Department has a Bicycle User Group that encourages employees to get to work by bike, and was very active in last year's Ride to Work Day™.

As a keen sponsor of Ride to Work Day™, the Victorian Government supports Bicycle Victoria's efforts to get more Victorians on their bikes. We are also delivering on our election commitment to encourage cycling through our \$5 million program to create 91 kilometres of new bicycle paths and lanes across Victoria. Through the Victorian Government's TravelSmart program we actively encourage Melbourne's residents to leave the car at home and take up more environmentally friendly transport like cycling.

Workplace Bicycle User Groups will work in partnership with the Victorian Government's programs to get more people onto their bikes. Workplace Bicycle User Groups are a fun, social way to encourage more people onto their bikes, and can be a useful way of getting better cycling facilities in your workplace.

This guide features practical information about what workplace Bicycle User Groups do and how to start one, with case studies of existing groups included for inspiration.

I commend this guide to you.

**Peter Batchelor MP**  
Minister for Transport



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## What is a Bicycle User Group?

A Bicycle User Group (BUG) brings cyclists together for all sorts of different reasons. Some BUGs are purely social, others are a way for cyclists to promote the benefits of riding. In some cases BUGs have helped improve facilities so that a workplace or local neighbourhood becomes more cycle-friendly. Your BUG can be whatever you and your fellow riders want or need it to be.

### **BUGs in the workplace**

Cycling to work is good exercise and a great way to kick-start your day. Bicycle Victoria's Ride to Work Day™, held in October each year, encourages an increasing number of workplaces to think about how they can get more people cycling to work more often.

A workplace BUG is a valuable start because it can raise the profile of cycling within an organisation or company and help to get cyclists' needs addressed. Workplace BUGs often organise social activities and rides, and they are renowned for their sponsored breakfasts!

As you will see from this guide, all sorts of workplaces – large and small, government and private, central and suburban – have set up BUGs. This guide is designed to get you started with organising your own workplace BUG.



*BUG members share knowledge and skills*

*Riding to work is a great excuse for a yummy breakfast*





## Why start a workplace BUG?

There are all sorts of great reasons to start a workplace BUG, and lots of good things you can do once you are up and running.

Maybe people who already cycle to work could ride with other staff who would like to as well, but need some encouragement to get started. Perhaps you want to campaign for bike lanes near where you work or meet with management to improve facilities in your workplace. Or you might simply want to get to know more of the people who ride to your workplace.

This guide includes six inspirational BUG stories to illustrate what some workplace BUGs are already doing, including:

- Improving the facilities at their workplace for cyclists, such as getting showers and lockers installed
- Organising social rides on evenings and weekends for members
- Encouraging people who don't cycle to work to give it a try
- Taking part as a team in Ride to Work Day™ and charity rides
- Working with other BUGs to lobby for the extension of bike paths to their workplace.

Every BUG is different, so feel free to take what applies to your situation and adapt it to suit your own circumstances and needs. You can choose how formal or informal the group will be and how it will work.

You need to think about how a workplace BUG will best fit in with what you already know about your organisation: for example, what's the best way to communicate with other staff, do they enjoy informal gatherings with each other, and what will your senior managers think?



*Riding to Work has a long history at The Alfred Hospital. Neurosurgeon Hugh Trumble's 1930s bike provides inspiration to The Alfred BUG convenors Andrew Edwards & Rod Mann.*



## Getting started

You are the expert when it comes to starting a BUG – there isn't really a right or wrong way to begin. But there *are* proven success stories. Here we have listed some ideas based on the experiences of successful workplace BUGs for getting your group up and running (to read about some of these examples go to pages 6–11).

### Step 1:

Your most valuable resource is the pool of people who already ride to work and their connections with each other. Your future BUG will strengthen the existing networks between people, so it will help to know where they are first. Set your own goals and find people to help you – see the Action Plan on page 12 for ideas.

#### Who's interested in a workplace BUG?

- Send out an email asking who might be interested.
- Plan your first meeting or get-together. Your organisation might like to sponsor a morning tea or perhaps a local bakery would like to use this as a marketing opportunity.
- Put up posters promoting your first get-together near the bike racks, the showers, on the car park door and in the tearoom. Encourage everyone who rides and who might like to ride to come along.
- Provide an incentive for people to come to the first meeting. A cycling-related prize, such as a free service at your local bike shop, would be ideal.
- Ask people to indicate their interest by email so that you build up a list of addresses. Many BUGs operate mainly through email.

### Step 2:

Once you have contacted people and have their interest, now what? BUGs need to do what their members are interested in, so try to involve them as much as possible in deciding what you will do and where, how often you will meet (if at all) and so on.

#### What will your workplace BUG do?

- Keep an email list active and send out monthly newsletters.
- Set up a 'buddy system' or list of riders and suburbs they ride from so that new riders get the initial support they need.
- Hold an event to share tips, answer questions and start discussion.
- Organise events with your social club such as evening rides and family days.
- Contact a local bike shop and ask them about offering discounts to members.
- Plan a second get-together that's more hands-on, such as a free bike maintenance session organised with the local bike shop.
- Invite guest speakers, such as Bicycle Victoria, inspirational cyclists, representatives of other active BUGs or bike police.
- Provide a map or guide to bike facilities on site.
- Organise 'riding in traffic' seminars.
- Conduct a survey to find out why people ride recreationally but not to work.
- Start a survey or website for people to register their suggestions and ideas. This can help determine the aims and activities of your BUG and also get a picture of bike facilities at your workplace.
- Provide a bike toolbox in your workplace.
- If you don't already have one, start a Portfolio Partners Around the Bay in a Day® team and train together.



*Robert Judd and Antoliv BUG share know-how at a maintenance workshop in their workplace.*



## Riding On

### Step 3:

Keeping cyclists interested in your workplace BUG and participating in its activities means that the BUG maintains its enthusiasm and is doing what all BUGs need to do – that is, be what its members want it to be. Ensuring this continues to happen takes some planning and energy.

#### How do you keep the momentum up?

- Establish a steering committee or core group of people who are enthusiastic about maintaining the BUG.
- Organise a planning session to get together and create a strategy or program of events for the coming year.
- Work out the priorities or goals for your long-term campaigns, such as more showers or a bike lane.
- Enlist support from senior management or other parts of your organisation, such as an environment or HR department.
- Think about departments or external groups that can help you with funding.



*Foster a good relationship with senior management in your workplace*



*Staff from The Centre enjoy the fun of Ride to Work Day 2004, an event that often launches workplace BUGs. Located in Wangaratta and Benalla, The Centre staff build opportunities for individual's and organisation's through education, physical activity and establishing community links.*

## A network of BUGs

As anyone who has worked in a large organisation will know, spreading information around a considerable bureaucracy takes time and effort. Government departments are a good example of just this kind of organisation. They are also workplaces where BUGs are starting and growing. So how does a government BUG manage to keep staff informed about its activities given the sheer size of some departments?

### Spreading the word

When the BUG at the Department of Infrastructure (DOI BUG) wanted to promote its involvement in Ride to Work Day™, Damon Rao, who currently coordinates DOI BUG, recalls that it needed more than a casual sign above the water cooler.

“In the lead up to Ride to Work Day™ we had an elaborate system of representatives with posters on each floor pointing people to a cycling staff member on that floor as a point of reference for cycling questions. These people also distributed TravelSmart maps.”

DOI BUG published an Intranet news bulletin that listed each floor representative by suburb so that potential first-time riders could team up with someone in their area and talk about how to ride in from their suburb.

On the actual day the DOI BUG asked every participating cyclist to report the route they took into the city. The BUG plans to publish these on the web so that staff can see the potential routes they can use to ride into the DOI offices in the city.

### Keeping up the momentum

DOI BUG is a member of the Vic Gov BUG Network (see panel to the right) and also organises its own seminars and workshops for members. For example, the BUG hosted a bicycle maintenance workshop and a seminar by officers of the Police Bicycle Patrol Group who talked about riding skills and what it is like to be a police officer on a bike.

Damon believes that BUGs can start with simply “one person putting their hand up and maintaining a group list. The activities slowly grow from there.”

He says “it is important to have events in the diary, as any time spent being involved in BUG activities is extra to paid work responsibilities”.

Dates help to focus activities and ensure that staff can plan in advance to be involved despite work commitments. Annual events like Ride to Work Day™ are ideal for this, as are social catch-ups on recreational rides or other regular rides. These more informal occasions are also a really vital component of keeping people involved in wider BUG activities.



## The Vic Gov BUG network

After DOI BUG was started, members found out that their colleagues in the Department of Premier and the Department of Treasury had recently formed BUGs too and decided to network together and offer each other support. The Vic Gov BUG Network, a network of government BUGs, was born.

Apart from linking existing BUGs together (like those for the Departments of Treasury and Finance, Premier and Cabinet, and Education and Training), the network has also been responsible for starting up other departmental workplace BUGs such as at the Departments of Victorian Communities and Primary Industries, and government agency BUGs like the ones at the Environment Protection Agency and the former Sustainable Energy Authority of Victoria.

Damon Rao is enthusiastic about the benefits of the network: “The advantage of setting up a network is that it enables events or workshops that have been organised by one BUG to be replicated with little further work”.

For example, social rides can sometimes have a poor turn out if only a single workplace BUG is involved. But using the network, rides can be a decent size even if only a couple of people from each BUG come along.

The size of the network BUG has also attracted outside interest. CBD bike shops are very keen to support the network and offer 10 per cent discount to members of the government BUGs.

CASE STUDY



## BUGs for fun and fitness

On a free afternoon in 2003 David Levin QC found himself surfing the web. He discovered the Bicycle Victoria generic *BUG Start-up Manual* on the Bicycle Victoria website ([www.bv.com.au](http://www.bv.com.au)) and put up a small poster in his building to find out if anyone else wanted to start a BUG. Within two days he had received 10 email responses, all of them positive. Email is still the main form of communication for this BUG, which now has over 90 members.

A long-time cyclist, David says he wanted to use cycling to promote a healthier lifestyle among his colleagues who are in the largely sedentary profession of law. He commissioned a quirky logo and organised a Ride to Work Day™ breakfast. The participants became a core group, or steering committee, which plans activities for the BUG. Past events have included bike maintenance courses, evening rides along the Yarra and a trip to the farmers' market at Collingwood Children's Farm.

### Everyone is welcome

All riders at the Victorian Bar are welcome to become members, not just commuters. The group is making commuters at the Bar more visible, and is helping to make cyclists more aware of each other. The existence of the BUG has got everyone thinking about end-of-trip facilities. David reports that Wigs on Wheels "gains support from all of our colleagues. I think most are envious and wish they had the courage to join in".

The Wigs on Wheels logo – something that David says is "very amusing and makes people smile" – was designed by Natasha Jerrard of *tbjcreative*. The logo adorns T-shirts for members and has been the most important thing so far in promoting the BUG.

The group currently has no formal membership scheme. "We are merely an email list of barristers, judges, secretaries and employees of the Victorian Bar," explains David. Interested cyclists can register their interest and suggestions online on the BUG website ([www.vicbar.com.au/3\\_2\\_30.html](http://www.vicbar.com.au/3_2_30.html)).

### Success you can't measure

Wigs on Wheels organises a number of events, not all of which are well attended. However, there is a committed core group who have learned not to measure success by the number of cyclists participating in any one event.

David believes that "if only a few cyclists participate in any one event, that is fine. What needs to be done is to change the lifestyle of many people and the culture of the working community."

That is the long-term goal and every little step along the way should be counted a success.

## Wigs on Wheels

Wigs on Wheels demonstrates that a BUG doesn't always have to be a group of people who are from the same organisation. A BUG can link cyclists from an industry, profession or, in the case of Wigs on Wheels, individuals who are working within different parts of the law community.

One challenge of this arrangement is the provision of communal facilities. As more people cycle to the Victorian Bar, the pressure on bicycle parking becomes more intense. While drivers pay a hefty amount per month for a parking space, cyclists – until now – have paid nothing. This has recently changed with cyclists now being required to bear some of the cost of a new secure bike parking area.

David acknowledges that this is an issue that has arisen because no one organisation provides the facilities.

"Companies spend money to keep employees content and know that providing bicycle parking facilities saves them money. The Bar does not employ barristers; facilities are provided on a communal basis for the entire Bar."

The wider question is whether facilities that are provided for a subset of a workplace community should be subsidised by the entire body. This will be an ongoing issue for Wigs on Wheels.

CASE STUDY



## Strength in numbers

One of the first things visitors to the Alfred Hospital Museum Room notice is the handsome old bicycle that the respected neurosurgeon, Dr Hugh Trumble, used to commute to the hospital in the 1930s.

Ben O'Loughlin, Alfred Archivist and Coordinator of the Alfred BUG, likes to wheel it out occasionally and use it to remind other staff that getting to the Alfred by bike has a long history. These days he estimates that around 400 staff cycle to the main Alfred site in Prahran in Melbourne, including people who work on site for affiliated organisations such as Monash Medical School and Baker Institute.

When Ben took on the job of coordinating the Alfred BUG 12 months ago, there were a dozen members. Now he has 200. So what's the secret to achieving such a rapid increase?

"The best way to get a BUG up and running is to just do it," says Ben. He doesn't spend more than around 1–2 hours a week on BUG business, and suggests that "a lot of the interest has been achieved through using the BUG as a way of communicating to people about cycling to the Alfred and making sure that all staff know that anyone is welcome to get involved".

One of the big issues at the hospital has been where riders should put their bikes once they get there. Even though the number of bike parking spaces has doubled to around 90 at the main Alfred site, this is still not nearly enough.

Alfred BUG is developing a business case for increasing provision to demonstrate that more parking for cyclists could lead to savings on the amount of money being spent by the hospital on leasing car parking spaces from private car parks. The BUG is working with the hospital's executive who, Ben says, are "very supportive".

Danielle Whitman, TravelSmart coordinator for the Alfred, has been impressed with the growth of the BUG and has noticed that people who work in health often care about their own health too and know the benefits of cycling. Ben agrees and suggests that anyone thinking of getting a BUG up and running needs to promote to their employer the benefits of getting more employees to cycle.

"Staff who are healthier have a better attendance record, better morale and are better able to look after their own health conditions. That's a positive pay-off for any organisation."



### The Alfred BUG

With around 200 members, the Alfred BUG has a lot of people that it needs to keep informed about what is happening.

Not surprisingly, email has a huge role to play. The coordinator, Ben O'Loughlin, keeps members informed about cycling-related information via an e-newsletter called *The Alfred BUG Encyclical*. He also organises regular cycles to work (called 'cycle-in'), which finish with a coffee or sometimes a sponsored breakfast.

Some BUG members field teams for fundraising cycle rides like the Murray to Moyne and Port to Port. These are a great way for Alfred cyclists to get to know each other, raise money for the hospital and have fun at the same time.

Alfred BUG also recognises the importance of communicating with senior management. The BUG has been working with the hospital's executive to draft a cycling policy that acknowledges the etiquette that cyclists should observe, and sets out the role of the hospital in accommodating cyclists' needs.

The BUG also encourages people who don't ride to join, through articles in the staff newsletter and by word of mouth. One staff member found out about the BUG before she even owned a bike. She now cycles regularly from Altona in Melbourne's west to the Alfred – a round trip of 48km.

CASE STUDY

