

From little things, BUG things grow



When Debra Parnell of Alzheimer's Australia Vic decided to set up a BUG at her Melbourne office, she knew she wanted a catchy name. While the competition she ran came up with some good titles, the runaway winner was 'Brains in Gear'.

Getting a BUG up and running

After encouraging some other staff to get involved in Ride to Work Days, Debra set up Brains in Gear BUG to "validate cycling as a workplace activity".

"Having the BUG hasn't changed things dramatically. We are still an informal network of cyclists, but it provides support for cyclists and helps us to access information."

Brains in Gear BUG encourages staff to cycle to work, but has also used organised rides, like the Murray to Moyne, to involve staff in cycling events who haven't thought about riding to work. Being a part of this has encouraged a couple of staff to try commuting.

Setting up the BUG has been one step towards cycling slowly being accepted into the workplace culture, and having it recognised as a legitimate way of staff getting to work.

Anyone can ride

Most of the staff at Alzheimer's Australia Vic are women, and Debra believes that it has been important for them to see that cycling doesn't necessarily have to be competitive.

"I think some people think of cycling as something you need to do in a big pack, and that you have to be really fit. By encouraging staff to be involved in social cycling events I have tried to break down this perception and show them that anybody can ride a bike, and that it can be fun too."

Brains in Gear is a small BUG (see panel on the right), and keeping it ticking over is not an arduous job. Even so, Debra believes that it still requires someone to coordinate the BUG who is recognised as being enthusiastic about cycling. While management supports the BUG and believes it is positive for staff morale and health, there still needs to be at least one person who can promote the BUG from a position of knowing what cycling to work is all about.

Debra believes that anyone who is thinking about starting a workplace BUG should do it.

"It's a great addition to a workplace. It provides an ideal vehicle to create awareness and interest from people who wouldn't normally think about cycling. Setting up a BUG can be as easy or as difficult as you want it to be – but make sure it is fun."

Brains in Gear BUG

The Alzheimers Australia Vic office in Melbourne has about 50 staff including a number of part-time employees. While it is only a small organisation, Debra believes that this has its advantages when it comes to organising BUGs.

"Big BUGs in large organisations are obviously fantastic, but there is a certain informality and approachability about a small BUG which is good too. Because most of the people who work here are already friends anyway, it can help them to think 'My friend cycles to work so why can't I?'"

Because staff are regularly seeing each other there isn't the need to have a highly formalised structure for a BUG. Debra also finds that other staff are comfortable with asking her all about what it is like to ride to work because they already know her.

Despite this informality, BUGs in small organisations still need to make sure that they find ways of getting staff keen to be involved, or in some cases to try riding to work for the first time. No matter how large or small a BUG is, having fun and promoting the positives of cycling, like health, is still important. And in a small BUG there are some extra positives to plug – like the fact that you won't have to queue for the shower!

CASE STUDY



BUGs in the burbs

At Autoliv Australia, Tuesday is BUG day. While there are employees who ride to work regularly, the Autoliv BUG makes a point of encouraging people to cycle to work on Tuesdays.

Commuting from the top down

The Autoliv BUG began life after a successful Ride to Work Day™ in 2003. The company takes the health and wellbeing of its employees seriously and, in light of this, management has supported the activities of the BUG.

Autoliv has provided showers, secure lockers and a bicycle shed, as well as contributing towards the cost of the Autoliv BUG tops (you can't miss the distinctive yellow shirts). For Ride to Work Days, employees ride from all around Melbourne to the company site at Campellfield in the northern suburbs. The Managing Director, Bob Franklin, rides from bayside Brighton and others come in from as far away as Werribee in the western suburbs.

A family affair

Autoliv BUG is always looking for ways to encourage people to get cycling. Members organise a popular Sunday ride for employees once a month, which starts at a café and finishes with lunch. At the most recent BUG ride there were two families with bike trailers and a number of children and friends as well as staff. There are even plans to run Autoliv BUG cycling weekends.

The Autoliv BUG coordinators, David Thompson and Robert Judd, believe that involving people in the social rides can then get them thinking about cycling to work. Even though the rides are in employees' own time, they have proved to be a hit. David says that "We have some people come along to the social rides who have bought bikes to make sure they can take part". People join the BUG because they are interested in the fitness that cycling can bring and they can see the opportunities there are to have a social time with other employees.

Raising the profile

The Autoliv BUG promotes itself on the company Intranet by 'sponsoring' the four-day weather forecast displayed on the site. It also contributes stories and pictures to the staff newsletter, and lets every employee know about future rides and events via mass internal email. David estimates that it takes one to two hours a week to keep the BUG ticking over. He believes that management interest and involvement is a key part of the success of any BUG.

The next challenge for the BUG is to organise those weekend rides – watch out for the Autoliv BUG bright yellow tops when you are on a recreational ride in the future.



Autoliv BUG

The Hume Highway address of the Autoliv site sounds intimidating but commuting cyclists are a clever breed.

"Actually," says David Thompson, "apart from the last 500 metres or so, most employees can get here via a combination of on-road and off-road bikepaths".

Nonetheless, safety is a priority. Having now got to the point where there are facilities on-site like showers and lockers, Autoliv BUG is keen to ensure that there are safe routes for employees to get to work. The BUG has had initial discussions with a rider from the nearby Ford factory about lobbying to extend the Upfield Bike Path from Fawkner, where it currently ends, to Ford. This could have potential benefits for Autoliv employees too.

David doesn't believe that being located in a suburb, rather than in the centre of a city or town, poses any special problems for a BUG, although it might take a bit of extra effort to work out the best cycling route. Autoliv BUG members help new cyclists work out the right paths to take and can meet them along the way if necessary. Sometimes the advice can be as simple as getting people to think about how the recreational paths they use on the weekend might also get them to work. All good ways to get more people cycling more often.

CASE STUDY





Local to global

When Simon Whitehead decided he wanted to share his enjoyment of cycling with his colleagues, he knew that he needed to get the senior leadership team involved from the start.

“I talked with other employees about which senior person would be the best person to approach about starting a BUG at Boeing. I presented that person with a business plan for the BUG, which included planned activities, roles, costs and so on. A low cost plan was paramount in securing the support of the senior leadership team.”

Involving the whole company

Simon, a Melbourne-based design engineer with Hawker de Havilland, a Boeing company, has now launched the Boeing Bicycle User Group. The BUG’s activities are overseen by a member of the senior leadership team. The company’s human resources and marketing departments support the activities of the BUG and fundraising efforts are coordinated through the Employees Community Fund.

Tony Carolan, the company’s General Manager for Business Development, is a keen cyclist and believes that the Boeing BUG is a “great idea”.

“At Hawker de Havilland, we’re always very interested in supporting any efforts to improve employee health and assisting the Boeing BUG is a great way to do that. We certainly can’t ignore the fact that the BUG is also contributing to the health of our environment.”

The Boeing BUG has its own jersey, which employees can buy and a bi-monthly newsletter. People who aren’t already members are encouraged to join through bulletin board announcements, word of mouth and events like Ride to Work Day™ and social rides.

Coordinating a BUG

Simon estimates that coordinating the BUG’s activities takes one or two hours a fortnight. He encourages people who might be thinking about setting up a workplace BUG to set goals, but allocate generous timeframes to meet them. In his experience, improving bicycle facilities takes time and money.

It is also important for a coordinator to set limits on their own involvement and to stick to these. For example, do you want to organise social rides for the BUG or are you happy to tap into what already exists, such as Ride to Work Day™?

Making links with other companies

Boeing BUG also works hard to build links with other people who ride to work in Fishermans Bend in Melbourne. Simon believes that this fast-growing community will be crucial to support the development of better parking and riding facilities in the long-term, but for now the most important thing is to provide support and social interaction for riders.

Boeing BUG

Most workplace BUGs are happy to include as many local employees as possible. But the Boeing companies have a different approach. The Boeing BUG now has more than 100 members across its two sites in Bankstown, Sydney and Fishermans Bend in Melbourne. While there haven’t been any joint rides yet between the Melbourne and Sydney branches, some BUG members travel frequently between both sites and have attended events in both states.

Simon believes that the best thing about the workplace BUG is that employees get to meet and mix with other riders in the company who they probably would never have met otherwise. This can even extend to international colleagues.

“There are several similar bicycle organisations within the greater Boeing company. Using email we are able to maintain a level of contact that enables each organisation to support visiting cyclists.”

For example, the company has a number of long-term visitors from overseas who would normally commute by bicycle in their own country. The Boeing BUG provides a point of contact for these visitors to confirm that they will be able to cycle to work when they are in Australia and the best way to get started. This includes advising on the most suitable routes to work, parking and that universal concern for cyclists – the vagaries of the weather.

CASE STUDY



Action plan

Get your BUG going

The previous pages of this guide have illustrated what is possible once a workplace BUG is up and running. Now as Ben O'Loughlin from The Alfred BUG said about getting started, "Just do it".

The action plan below provides a checklist of some of the things to think about to help get your BUG underway. Space has been provided for your notes.

- Are there other cyclists in my organisation? What are their names?

- Where should I publicise the idea for a BUG?

- What are the existing bike facilities here?

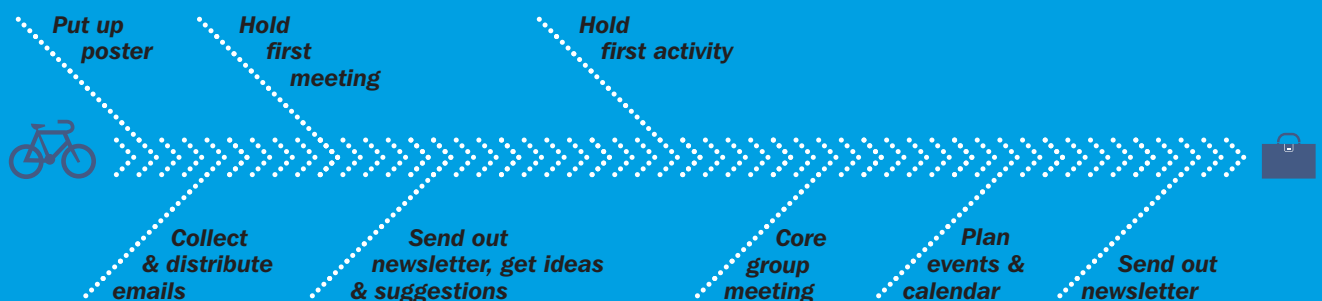
- Who else would support my efforts? Who in management?

- What might be the objectives of our BUG?

- What are some ways to communicate with other staff?

Set a timeline

Use the timeline below to insert dates beside the key actions that need to happen to get the first meeting of your workplace BUG organised.





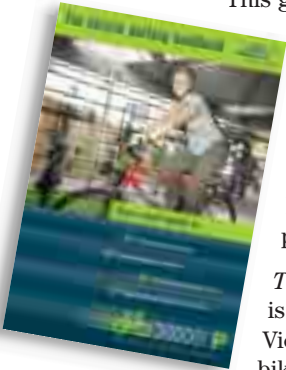
Resources and contacts

Bicycle Victoria

Bicycle Victoria is Australia's largest and fastest-growing cycling organisation. We are a self-funded community organisation independent of government. Assisting the establishment and enrichment of BUGs is a key part of our aim of getting *More People Cycling More Often*.

If you'd like to discuss plans and ideas for your BUG with Bicycle Victoria, call on (03) 8636 8823 (1800 639 634 country callers) or email heidim@bv.com.au.

The bicycle parking handbook



This guide contains the essential tools for assisting managers, employers and building administrators to make workplaces and other buildings desirable cycling destinations. Good end-of-trip facilities encourage new riders and help prevent bicycles from being parked inappropriately.

The bicycle parking handbook is free, and available from Bicycle Victoria or www.bv.com.au (Search: bike parking).

Bicycle Victoria – The Bicycle Parking Experts™

We have more than 10 years experience providing bike parking across Australia and offer:

- A comprehensive design and consultation service (Australia wide)
- A wide range of bicycle parking products to suit your needs
- A complete construction and installation service (Melbourne, Geelong and ACT).
- All proceeds help get *More People Cycling More Often*.

The cycle-friendly workplace



When you're talking to senior management about cycling and setting up a workplace BUG, Bicycle Victoria's *The cycle-friendly workplace* booklet will be a useful tool. This guide outlines the benefits of cycling for workplaces and provides practical tips on how these improvements can be achieved. It emphasises the importance of creating a cycle-friendly culture, particularly through starting up workplace BUGs.

Order your free copy from Bicycle Victoria on (03) 8636 8888 (1800 639 634 country callers) or bicyclevic@bv.com.au.

Bike maps

Bicycle Victoria keeps a comprehensive list of current bike maps. Many local councils have free bike maps, notably the City of Melbourne. The Melway shows shared paths and has an overview map of the bicycle lane and path network in Melbourne in the 'special purpose maps' pages.

TravelSmart

TravelSmart is an innovative program that helps people reduce their dependency on cars and choose sustainable travel alternatives such as cycling, walking or public transport. TravelSmart's workplace program helps Victorian employers reduce the impact of their work-related travel through simple strategies and ideas. For more information visit www.travelsmart.vic.gov.au.

We value your feedback

Please tell us what you think of this guide or how we can improve it. Contact Bicycle Victoria's Commuter Cycling Developer, Heidi Marfurt, by email on heidim@bv.com.au.

This guide is for anyone who wants to set up a Bicycle User Group in their workplace and for employers who want to understand the benefits of facilitating the cycling of their staff. It explains what workplace BUGs do, how to get one going and presents various examples of workplace BUGs already in action. Inside you'll find all the resources you'll need and a plan to get you started and keep you going.

"As a cyclist I was delighted when Boeing BUG started in my workplace – I enjoy the community and the organised BUG events. As a member of the senior leadership team I'm also keen to support the healthy lifestyle of cycling to work that the BUG promotes, because a fit and active workforce is a benefit to Boeing – Hawker de Havilland."



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