

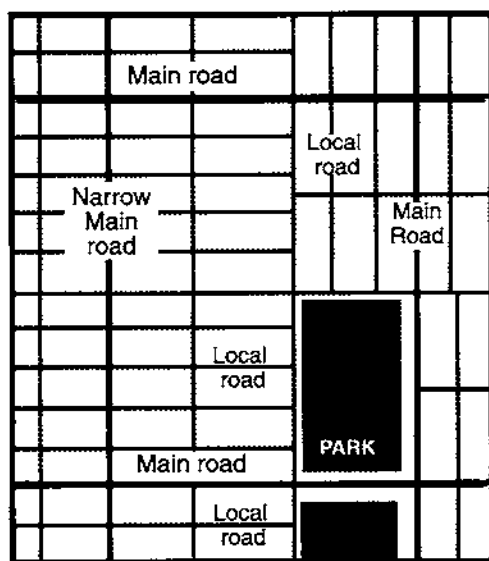
Wake Up Melbourne

Alan A Parker, Vice President Campaigns, Victorian Bicycle Coalition, argues that the new Government in Victoria needs to make major changes to meet cyclists' needs.

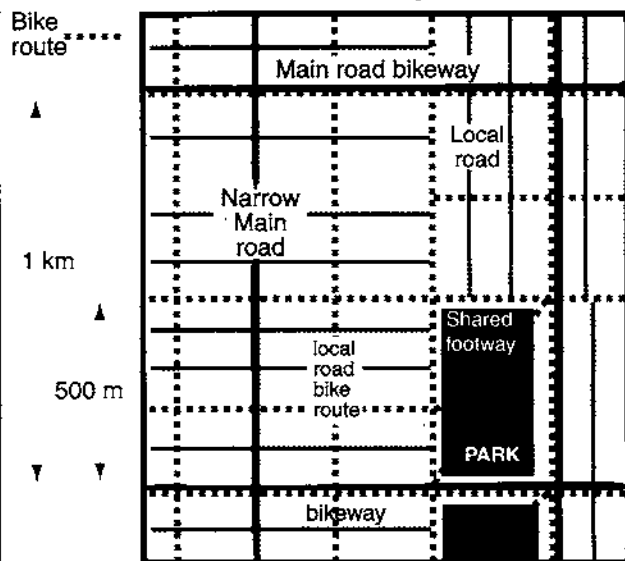
In November, the new Victorian Minister for Transport, Peter Bachelor, increased the bicycle budget by \$3 million a year for three years. This will lift it in real money terms to about 25 per cent more than what it was under the last Labor Minister in 1986 (\$2.5

million or \$5 million at 1999 prices). It is still around \$30 million a year less than what is needed to catch up with past lack of funding under the Coalition government and to counteract badly planned urban road construction programs that are generating

Main Road Network



Arterial Bikeway Network



Typical Melbourne middle suburb on rectangular road grid.

Arterial networks of main roads have a coarse mesh as shown on the left. The bikeway network must be of a much finer mesh so that for most short car trips it is more direct and quicker to get from A to B by bicycle, as shown on the right. The proposed "Principal Bicycle Network" in Melbourne is far too coarse, with too many discontinuities and too few shortcuts to encourage bicycle use. Dutch arterial bicycle networks provide short cuts for cyclists and pedestrians over and under freeways, railway lines, rivers and other barriers to motor vehicle travel. Bikeways on or alongside need to be linked up with traffic calmed local streets and off-road shared footways and all one-way streets for cars need to be two-way streets for bicycles. 40 km/h limits on all local roads.

more urban sprawl and car use. The Minister is clearly badly advised and knows little about cyclists' needs. Unless he makes significant changes, this Minister will probably be just as big a disaster for cycling as the ALP Minister in the previous Labor government who scrapped the Melbourne Bikeplan and replaced it with a Micky Mouse Melbourne Bicycle Strategy. (Australian Cyclist, Feb-March 1997)

In the Melbourne media, Bicycle Victoria (BV) praised the Minister to high heaven but there was not one word about the need for at least four more staff for the State Bicycle Planning Unit, which has only two staff, or the need for at least another \$20 million a year for bicycle facilities.

With the exception of Canberra, Victoria led the way in bicycle planning and construction in Australia between 1975 and 1985. Today, after ten years of token activity by VicRoads coupled with weak political lobbying by BV in Melbourne, only 820 km of the 3300 km-long principal bicycle network has been built. The State Bicycle Committee has been downgraded and has only two staff members and the Chairperson is so busy that the committee meets every two months instead of every month.

A 5000 km-long Bikeway Network for Melbourne

There is a need to remind the Victorian Minister for Transport, Peter Bachelor, that he is continuing Kennet's policy of ignoring the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector. This new ALP government is unlikely to change transport and land use policies, choosing instead to pay lip service to reducing GHG emissions while encouraging ecologically unsustainable development. For example, Australia is increasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions

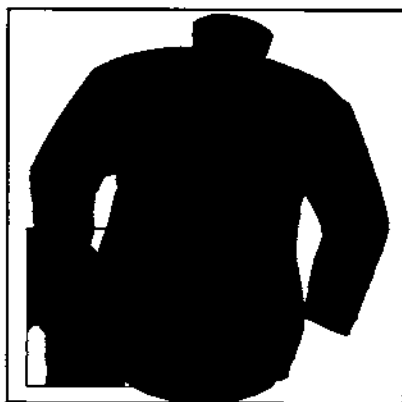
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With Bow-string vent system



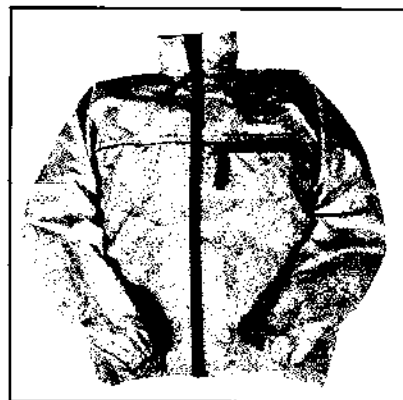
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Uniquely Australian

from transport by 1.6 per cent per annum and the Bureau of Transport Economics has predicted that congestion costs for Melbourne will increase by \$5.1 billion by the year 2015. Australia and the State of Victoria, in common with many other countries, have failed to implement the following Agenda 21 (Rio de Janeiro 1992) transport strategy:

"Transportation strategies should reduce the need for motor vehicles by favouring high occupancy public transport and providing safe bicycle and foot paths. Municipalities need to be developed in ways that reduce the need for long distance commuting."

Some countries, like the Netherlands, have for 20 years maintained high levels of "everyday cycling" (28 per cent of all trips) and a high level of investment in bicycle infrastructure. Without adequate funding, everyday bicycle riding would have continued to decline in the Netherlands from 19 billion kms in 1960 to 8.5 billion kms in 1978 and then down to 3 or 4 billion kms by 1999, a level that would not be much better than in Australia today. With adequate funding and bicycle network planning bicycle riding has increased to 13 billion km today and "bikeway networks" exist in all Dutch cities.

Dutch "bikeway networks" provide safe and continuous bicycle routes of finer mesh than the road

network. The finer mesh of the network means that there are lots of short cuts for cyclists and most short car trips of less than 5 km are even shorter by bicycle. Furthermore, most people can't park their cars or find it too expensive because it is planned to be that way. Compare that with the Westgate Bridge, the new Bolte Bridge and hundreds of kilometre of freeways that are no-ways for cyclists and remind us that in Melbourne we build short cuts for cars and ban cyclists from using these short cuts. To make matters worse we provide massive car parks in all new developments but hardly ever provide secure bicycle parking. The new Pymont bridge in Sydney makes provision for cyclists and pedestrians but there are none on, or underneath, the new Bolte Bridge in Melbourne to open up the new Docklands development where 900,000 people will live or work. Providing short cuts for cars that ban cyclists is gross discrimination is not sustainable.

The Dutch view of bicycle network planning is that there should be two bike routes to every destination and one of them must be socially secure. By that they mean one route must be well lit and designed in such a way so that it is perceived as being safe particularly by female cyclists or the elderly (C.R.O.W. 10 1993). This is why the elegant simplicity of riding a bicycle is still popular after 30 years of motorisation and why slightly more women cycle than men. The

kind of bumbling that passes for bicycle planning in VicRoads has to be replaced with the high standard of professionalism in bicycle planning that exists in the Netherlands.

Victorian cyclists need to know that the Principal Bicycle Network (PBN) is not what it is cracked up to be. It is not a arterial bicycle network because in many suburbs the PBN routes are so far apart that the principal network is of a much coarser mesh than the main road network. That is the wrong way round. For example, if there are 2500 km of urban arterial roads in Melbourne then a usable "arterial bikeway network" would have to be at least twice as long (5000 km) to create all the shortcuts to significantly reduce the trip lengths of cyclists. The drawing shows what a real bicycle arterial network would be like in the Melbourne suburban grid.

More funding and staff for Vic Roads and Parks Victoria.

What have we got so far is a mere 800 km of shared footways and bikelanes on main roads. Many of these bikelanes or bicycle/car parking lanes are on roads with traffic that is far too fast and mostly unacceptable as a bicycle riding environment for traffic sensitive cyclists. Note that the Dutch only use bikelanes on roads with a maximum speed limit of 50 km/h or less. Clearly we have a long way to go in bicycle planning and we need safer routes and many more of them. The extra 3 million a year will not buy very much and that fact needs to be made very clear to Minister Peter Bachelor. What he should consider is the actual funding and extra staff needed in Vic Roads and Parks Victoria to achieve something in the next three years. My estimate is as follows:

1999/2000 financial year: Funding \$9 million, one more person to service State Bicycle Council.

