

Marrickville-South Sydney Bicycle Group is a volunteer not for profit group of local residents promoting cycling and improving the local environment.

ANNUAL REVIEW

2006 - 2007



It has been another busy year helping locals cycle to work, contributing to local bicycle plans and monitoring progress. Marrickville and Sydney Council made important commitments to cycling in the past year. MASSBUG was there at public consultation meetings, making submissions and letting the councils know we were expecting their commitments to be met.

The past couple of years we have focussed on showing locals how to get around safely through rides. In the past year we promoted rides from other BUGS and kept to our specialities like the now famous 'Chocolate Ride' and 'Sustainability Ride.' If anyone is interested in leading or planning rides we are always open to suggestions.

BIKE BUS

The Marrickville to the city Bike Bus is a regular route at the same time each morning and evening. Cyclists riding for the first time in many years, those unsure about traffic and others wanting company join the bus each day. This year regulars became media stars with regular appearances in the local papers, Radio National, ABC Sydney radio, Choice magazine and the Catalyst program.

The success of the Bike Bus was spread with the help of a grant from the Australian Greenhouse Office in the Department of Environment and Heritage. The grant supported a new website, www.bikebus.org.au, promotional video, vests, posters, postcards and training the Bike Bus 'drivers'. This has helped spread the service to other areas of Sydney. Interested in starting a Bike Bus of your own? Contact infor@bikebus.org.au to find out more.

PLANNING

Marrickville Council has just approved their Bike Plan. Its development and approach was innovative and a good example for other Councils. Some money has been allocated,

but of course, there is never enough to go around. We are hoping State grants will kick in for some projects.

Sydney Council is doing its best in an environment where State agencies have control over major roads and infrastructure. Without support from these agencies, the path system goes from very good to outright dangerous. Wilson Street is a good example of both. The local council has a fantastic contra flow lane up to the corner of Wilson and Erskineville roads. Then, thanks to the RTA, the lights have not been changed to cater for the new bicycle traffic. Let's hope pressure from locals will make the RTA do the right thing.

We met regularly with Sydney and Marrickville Councils. Our work involved a combination of tasks such as commenting on Traffic Committee proposals, submissions to draft management and bike plans, and negotiations to get hazards fixed.

GETTING ROAD AND PATHS FIXED

We start every meeting with a wish list of local problems we want fixed. Members put forward everything from overgrown plants on paths, holes that need fixing, ramps and illegal parking. Over the year we have taken these issues to whoever is responsible for getting it fixed. Knowing who does what can be a complicated business. It helps to share the knowledge.

We are currently compiling a list of roads and paths that need repairs. If you have a pet hate, like a major pothole, drainage problem, missing pram ramp, missing bike racks just email us a photo and we will add it to our suggestions to Council engineers.

SPREADING THE WORD

Getting out maps, advice about routes and services is an important part of MASSBUG's role. Cost of stalls and printing is also the biggest

expense we have, and how your fees are used. Sometimes a simple bit of information helps someone get on their bike.

Increasing numbers of cyclists helps drivers become more familiar and aware of what is around them.

In the past year we:

- Had lots of media about the Bike Bus
- Talked to 100s of people at community events like the Cooks River Festival, Marrickville Festival and Newtown Festival
- Kept our website fresh and up to date
- Given one on one information through our email and telephone lines

BEING HEARD

Sometimes proposals from the Road and Traffic Authority and other State agencies involve changes that affect our area. When this happens we make submissions to the public comment process from a local perspective.

The State Government elections were a focus this year. We met with the local member and continue to encourage her to see cycling as a practical transport option for the inner west. More cycling eases pollution, parking problems and traffic congestion. As well as keeping people fit.



Commuters getting their lights fitted.

LIGHT EVENT

The big safety event this year was our 'Winter Lights' initiative. As a result of a very kind donation, we were able to buy 30 good quality light sets. We stood on a corner in Newtown for half an hour and handed out the

lights for \$10 a set. It was a small but practical message for cyclists about being seen.

ORGANISING

MASSBUG is a very streamlined operation. We operate on next to nothing, manage to keep meetings to a minimum, operate a website and spread the work so no one is overloaded. We know how to make a little go a long way. There are lots of opportunities to help, some take only a few hours a year, such as handing out maps at a festival stand. If you want to take on something new or contribute to your local area, you can meet us at 7.30 pm the first Wednesday of each month at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre. Meetings each month discuss local issues and organise our responses. This includes finding opportunities to support new riders or those wanting to increase their confidence in traffic.

GREENWAY PROJECT

MASSBUG and local community groups have promoted the vision to provide an environmental, cultural and non-motorised transport corridor linking the Cooks River and Iron Cove. The project has Council and State Government support. During the last year funding from the Department of Planning has moved the project along and the first stage is set to be completed early 2008.

For more information on the GreenWay see our website at www.greenway.org.au

DRIVER AWARENESS AND POLICING

This year, MASSBUG was disappointed in the response by police to incidents where cyclists have been threatened and their bikes damaged. We are encouraging the NSW Government to seriously consider introducing a similar scheme to the New Zealand 'Community Roadwatch' program. New Zealand Police advise the owner of a motor vehicle about the unsafe or risky driving behaviour other road users observe and report. Reports are confidential. 1.5 full time positions manage the system for the whole of New Zealand. It gives drivers feedback so that they are encouraged to behave with concern for others on the roads.

Thank you to all our members who support MASSBUG through membership fees, meetings, volunteer at stalls, lead rides and of course cycle around Marrickville.