

March 2023

Climate Action Plan feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Tasmanian Government's draft Climate Action Plan 2023–25. As an organisation that promotes bike riding, Bicycle Network is interested in contributing to plans to decarbonise the state's transport system.

We note the government's plans to develop a transport sector emissions reduction plan by November this year and also note the electric vehicle working group still doesn't have a dedicated transport cycling representative on it, which is something that should be rectified.

As we have articulated in previous consultation rounds and submissions to the government, bicycles and electric bicycles should be seen as a central plank of a transport emissions reduction plan.

When people are contemplating a new type of transport it's a great opportunity to get them to think more broadly about how they get around. While electric cars charged with renewable energy will produce fewer emissions than petrol and diesel cars, it's still not a particularly efficient travel mode. An electric car still has to carry 2000 kg of car as well as the driver and passengers, whereas an electric bicycle only weighs about 20 kg plus the rider and passengers.

Electric cars will be a big part of our future but electric bicycles are cheaper to buy and run and offer genuine transport options for the majority of trips most people take each day in our urban centres. Most good quality electric bikes can be ridden up to 15 km per trip quite easily for a person of average fitness. That would cover most commutes in our major towns and be within distance to nearby shopping centres and service hubs.



In terms of cost of living, people will get the biggest bang for their buck if they can swap an electric bike for a second car. It would get rid of registration and insurance costs and have negligible running costs compared to a car. A bike that is ridden regularly for transport will need to be serviced, but again those costs are low when compared to a car service.

Recent research has found that even when people buy e-bikes to get more exercise, the convenience of the bikes means they are also used for trips that would have previously been taken by car.ⁱ

We know that providing separated cycleways suitable for all ages and abilities is the most needed initiative to get more people riding, which is something that Infrastructure Tasmania could deliver with enough funding. However, other initiatives specifically aimed at getting more people riding electric bicycles is something that could be incorporated into the transport sector emissions reduction plan.

1. Try before you buy

People who have never tried an e-bike don't always understand their potential as a transport option, and that they replace car trips rather than bike or walking trips, which is why initiatives like bike libraries or bike loans could be supported.

These schemes can be operated by local governments or community organisationsⁱⁱ in conjunction with bike shops and work by people leaving a deposit or paying a small loan fee to take a regular or cargo e-bike for 1–2 weeks to see how it could fit into their lives.ⁱⁱⁱ The government could contribute to staff costs, promotion and/or venue costs in partnership with other groups.

2. Assistance to buy

An e-bike no-interest loan scheme would help overcome that initial barrier of high purchase cost, and people can pay back the loan with the money they save from parking and petrol costs. Such a loan scheme could have two categories – standard e-bikes (up to \$6000) and cargo e-bikes (up to \$10,000). There could also be a stream for individuals and stream for businesses to buy staff e-bike fleets and cargo bikes for deliveries. Scotland provides loans of up to £6000 interest-free for four years and for businesses up to £30,000 to buy e-bike fleets. An e-bike scheme could be set up like



the Tasmanian Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme that allowed people to buy energy efficient home appliances and pay the cost back over three years.

3. Direct subsidies

These types of subsidies are popular in European countries to help people get onto e-bikes. The Netherlands' region of Arnhem-Nijmegen granted a subsidy of 30% of the purchase price and found that 84% of people who bought an e-bike using the subsidy kept using the e-bike.^{iv} Other places that have provided direct subsidies include Austria, Sweden, France, Germany, Spain, Norway, Italy and Finland. Some places have focused on cargo e-bikes recognising they can get more people out of cars, especially if they have children or if they are being used by businesses for deliveries or carrying tools and equipment.

They can also be associated with a vehicle trade-in to ensure the e-bike really is replacing car trips, e.g. California's Clean Cars 4 All program or the City of Ghent in Belgium which provides an e-bike grant when a car number plate is handed in.

4. Anti-theft bike parking

We know that separated infrastructure is the biggest incentive to get people riding for transport, but with e-bikes there is also the worry of theft so secure bike parking is also essential infrastructure.

In the past few years more places have rolled out electronic anti-theft bike parking that can also charge e-bikes via parking docks or bike lockers. These are space efficient and operate through a phone app or dedicated card, often linked to public transport systems.



This is a up-dated take on the bike cage concept where certain people have access to a communal cage to lock their bikes via a swipe card or phone app.

5. Salary Sacrificing

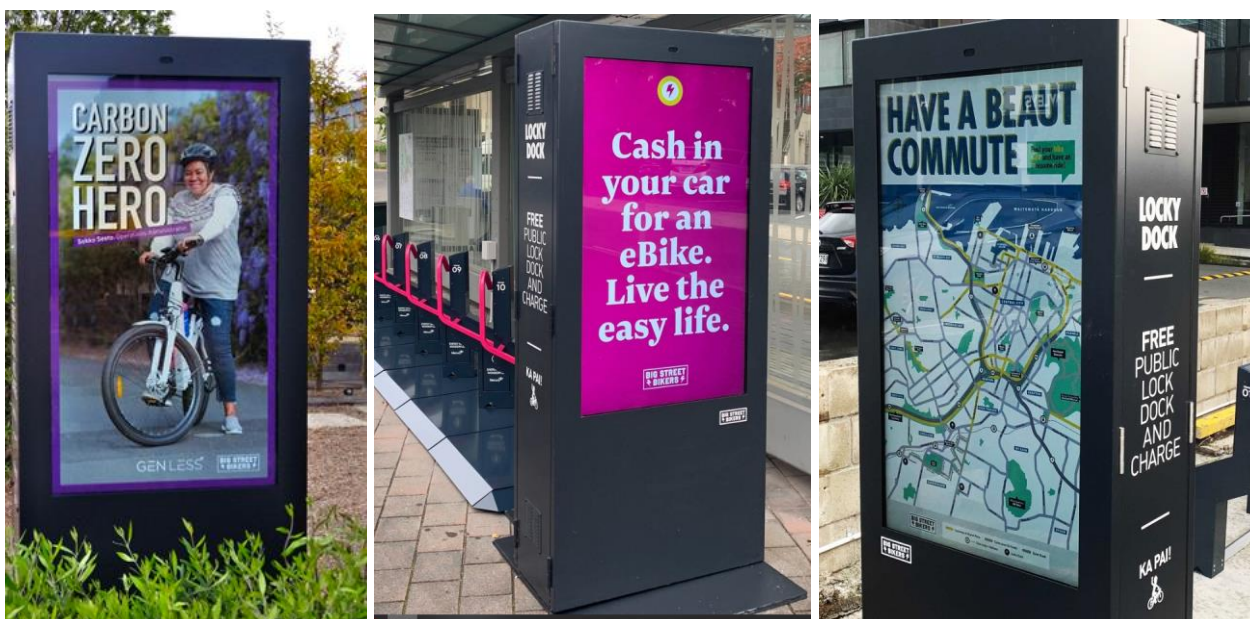
The Australian Taxation Office has issued a ruling allowing electric bicycles to be salary sacrificed for transport to work. One company, Sparque, provides lease e-bikes to businesses to use as bike fleets and for employee salary sacrificing. The University of Tasmania and MONA have signed up to Sparque and the company has set up operations in Tasmania. If public servants were given the chance to access this for salary sacrificing it would provide more opportunity for people to try a quality e-bike.

6. Long-term rental

A French transport agency is running an e-bike leasing scheme for all citizens with a fleet of 10,000 Veligo e-bikes available to rent monthly for \$65. The rationale is to expose people to e-bikes for up to 9 months so they can see the benefits and buy their own bike. A private leasing business operates in Melbourne and Sydney: www.lug-carrie.com that doesn't have a rental time limit, with the service being seen as an easy way to access an e-bike instead of buying one. The government could sponsor a long-term rental scheme like the French approach, or encourage private businesses such as Lug and Carrie to expand to Tasmania to give people the option of leasing instead of buying if they can't access salary sacrificing.

7. Promotion of low-carbon transport modes

Other cities and governments fund behaviour change campaigns to encourage people to choose more sustainable transport modes. The City of Sydney is a good example of a dedicated team promoting bike education, bike maintenance and wayfinding: www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/cycling. In New Zealand, Big Street Bikers use their Locky Dock bike parking pods for media campaigns to actively promote bike riding:



ⁱ Washington, Heesch and Ng, *E-bike Experience: Survey Study of Australian E-bike Users*, Queensland University of Technology for the Queensland Government, 3 March 2020 and Marilyn Johnson and Geoff Rose, “Extending Life on the Bike: Electric Bike Use by Older Australians”, *Journal of Transport and Health*, Volume 2, Issue 2, June 2015, pp 276–283.

ⁱⁱ See Change in Canberra currently runs a bike library funded by the ACT Government and supported by bike shop Switched on Cycles with small payment to cover insurance from the local equivalent of Bicycle Network.

<https://seechange.org.au/cbrebikelibrary>

ⁱⁱⁱ The Climate Council conducted a national poll in late 2022 which found more than 44% would be very or extremely interested in trying an e-bike for free, prompting the council to call on state governments to fund try-before-you-buy programs or offer discounts at the point of sale.

<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/people-and-transport-national-poll-2022-results/>

^{iv} European Cyclists Federation, *Electromobility for All: financial incentives for e-cycling*, 2016, p 13.