



# Australian Cycling Conference

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### **The role of cycling in a sustainable future**

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#### **Abstract**

The two most obvious obstacles to a sustainable urban transport system are climate change and “peak oil”. Encouraging cycling instead of cars or even public transport for urban commuting has three direct benefits. The propulsion is provided by human energy, in turn derived from potentially renewable fuels like muesli or Weetbix. A bicycle requires much less resources to construct and maintain than other vehicles. Thirdly, the surface on which it operates uses much less oil and energy for its construction and maintenance. As an indirect advantage, there are clear health benefits when people cycle rather than drive or use public transport, except for the risk of accidents when cycle paths are not separated from roads. World oil production may have already peaked and there is an urgent need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to slow down climate change. So it should be a high priority to implement policies that encourage a major shift of urban commuting to the bicycle. This shift must be reinforced by city planning based around the concept of compact urban villages, with all the services used regularly within easy cycling distance. There are civilised European cities in which cycling accounts for more than a third of all journeys. There is no reason for the relatively level Australian cities, such as Adelaide and Perth, not to aim at a similar pattern of urban travel.