



Billion-dollar bicycles

For those two-wheeled commuters jostling for space in limited bicycle lanes, news of the big growth in bike sales will come as no surprise. Australians bought 1.2 million bicycles last year. It is the ninth year that bicycles sales have outstripped car sales, the Cycling Promotion Fund, which bases its data on Australian Customs import figures, says. The biggest year of sales was 2007, with 1.4 million bikes bought. Bicycles are good business, worth about \$1 billion in 2008 and employing an estimated 6000 Australians across 1500 bicycle retailers. Bicycle commuting is rising in every city, Australian Bureau of Statistics data from 2001 to 2006 shows. Melbourne had the most spectacular growth – up 48.2 per cent to 18,047 bicycle commuters. Adelaide is next with 39 per cent growth to 6085 commuters, and Hobart increased by 30.2 per cent to 810. Collectively, cyclists travelled 189 million kilometres in 2006. Melbourne hopes to keep its lead with its Melbourne Bicycle Plan 2007-2011 by reducing crashes, improving awareness, and building more on-road and separate paths.

Kath Walters