

Bikes for Refugees scheme: report, to 1 March 2009

Mike Brisco 3 March 2009

Every year around 900 people arrive in Adelaide to set up new lives here, as part of the Commonwealth humanitarian program. They often arrive with very little, and certainly without cars, and without driving licences. Bikes are useful for providing transport, during this initial time, and also for children to ride around on. Many people used them overseas, and are glad to get bikes here.

We accept unwanted bikes from the public, check them, service and repair, then supply them free of charge, for people settling in Adelaide.

The scheme started in Dec 2003; since then we have received 1213 bike donations, and have donated 970 bikes for new arrivals. The scheme will hand over its 1000th bike in 2009.

Bicycles processed: 2008-9

Bikes received: 263

- 6 sold to help raise funds
- 31 salvaged for parts, or discarded.

Bikes suitable for servicing/repair to hand on: 226

- 164 handed to the Australian Refugee Association (ARA), Underdale
- 29 given out directly to families in Campbelltown
- 33 on hand at Campbelltown,

Our aim is to hand on a bike that is reliable, in good working order, to help people over the first year of settling in. The bikes are checked, repaired, restored and road tested. Tyre sealant is added to prevent punctures, and keep the bike on the road. We also supply some pumps and locks. Records are kept of all bikes, including details of donor, description of bike & serial number, and disposal of the bike.

We processed bikes in batches of 50-100, with three "working bee" week ends: one early in the year, one before Christmas, and one in the Christmas/new year break..

Australian Refugee Association

We have worked closely with the Australian Refugee Association for a number of years. ARA is a not for profit community organization with several decades experience in assisting refugees to settle into their new lives in Adelaide. Demand for bikes is high; BISA's role is sourcing bikes, and checking them, ARA take the bikes over, and hand them on to newly arrived families, as part of their Settlement program. ARA also offers other services to help people settle here e.g help with finding employment and education, etc. Currently demand for bikes is high, and ARA say they can take all bikes as we can provide.

Campbelltown community

We also give out bikes directly, to families who settled in Campbelltown. We offer a free repair scheme, at week-ends, to help keep bikes on the road, and to exchange bikes when children grow out of them.

Source of bikes:

Most are donated by members of the public, we prefer bikes that are unwanted or outgrown, & in good condition. ARA pass on some for repair. A small number come from bike shops, and via Campbelltown council. Most bikes are 5-15 years old, a mix of kids bikes, adult bikes, MTB, BMX, racers, etc. About half can be got going with a simple service and adjustments; others require basic repairs e.g replacing an inner tube or rusty gear cable; renewing brake blocks. We are always glad of bikes - tel Mike 8365 7489

Creating Work experience placement for young people, Dec 2008

Creating employment for young people, is another way we provide value to our community. In 2008 ARA offered workshops to help young people who wanted to find work, and we were happy to create work experience placements to support this scheme. In December, we offered a total of 134 hours work, to 4 teenagers from the Afghani community, who had varying experience of working with bikes before, overseas. The lads worked hard and diligently, helping with repairs, road testing, paperwork, etc. They also assisted at our two working bees during December. During 2008 a large backlog of bikes had built up, but thanks to these lads, and to volunteers, we were able to start 2009 with all bikes fixed.

Pay was at slightly above the statutory rate. The students also benefit from experience of work, plus a reference, to help find other jobs. We plan to offer other placements, in 2009.

Finances:

Bikes for Refugees operates under the same not-for-profit status as BISA, but aims to be self-funding & is independent of BISA's finances. In brief, most expenditure is on spare parts (inner tubes, tyre sealant, outer tyres, cables) plus accessories (locks, pumps). In 2008 we had additional expenses, for the work experience students, of wages, plus basic toolkits. Costs were kept to a minimum, by use of recycled parts as much as possible. Income is partly from sale of bikes, and partly from donations.

Value donated to the community during 2008: \$14,500

- \$11,300 226 bikes @ \$50 each: reliable secondhand bike, serviced, with tyre sealant;
 - \$3,000 time donated on bike repairs scheme, Campbelltown: 100 hours @ say \$30 per hour,
- \$200 Accessories (locks, pumps, etc) donated

Other news:

In June 2008, we received our 1000th donation: a red 24" Malvern Star mountain bike, donated by Ms Hewett. The bike was donated to a member of the African community, in Campbelltown.

The scheme is based in Campbelltown at Mike Brisco's house. Mike also volunteers occasionally with ARA, helping with settlement, and mentoring on job-ready workshops.

Plans for 2009:

We again, aim to handle 200-300 bikes, in 2-3 working bees during the year. This will mean, we can continue to assist anyone, who says they have a bike they would like to go to help refugees. It will also meet, as far as possible, needs from ARA & the local Campbelltown community.

Continuing & expanding work experience placements, will be a high priority. In this way, *Bikes for Refugees* provides not only bikes, but also jobs, and meaningful work for people employed. This helps BISA, with keen, hard working people to help handle the bikes - taking pressure off our volunteers. Many teenagers from newcommunities, are keen to get part time work - but can find it difficult to obtain a first position. Creating jobs, is an additional way to help those communities, and thus help our SA community overall.

During 2009, we will need to consider carefully, how to fund this. One area is bike sales. Some of the better bikes can be offered via classifieds; and we also get older collectors items, that can be offered via Ebay. A bike fetching say \$200, creates a placement, of 25-30 hours. We can then offer a teenager, a Saturday afternoon job for 2 months during school time; or a full time job for a week during school holidays.

Contact details:

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Acknowledgments:

We know from people in Campbelltown, the bikes are very much appreciated. Children can ride around, see friends, or go to the BMX park. Teenagers and young adults cycle to school or college. The bikes are also useful for shopping: new families usually don't have a driving licence and car, and the bikes can help with transport, while they get them.

First, thanks to Clarks Cycles bike shop, Magill Road, Kensington. Clarks Cycles help us with big discounts on parts, and also with advice and expertise, and we're very grateful for their consistent help over the years.

During 2008, around 100 people donated bikes to the scheme - thank you! These people donate time also - we ask them if they can drop the bike off, and invariably they agree. This helps too: it frees us, to use our spare time to repair & service bikes. More bikes get fixed - & at the end of the day, more people get bikes.

Thanks also to people who offered accessories and parts. These are always welcome, help make the bikes useful, and help keep our costs down.

Thanks again, to the many people who volunteered time to work on the bikes during 2008, during the working bees. During the year, volunteers contributed several hundred hours of their time to the scheme. This includes our regulars, Ollie, Brian, Ting, Sam, Sue, Stu, Richard, Jeremy, plus others. Many other BISA members drop by for a day, or a few hours - you know who you are, and to each of you, thanks. BISA is a small organization, and recycling 200+ bikes a year, is no small effort. We do very well, to run a scheme this size.

Finally, thanks Sue, Sam and Jeremy, who allow their houses to be used as "drop off points" for bike donations; Sam & Jeremy for selling bikes to raise funds; Brad for help delivering bikes; and our Settlement Officer contacts at the Australian Refugee Association - Craig Heidenreich and Dusko Cuckovic.



Dec 2008: working bee during Xmas/New Year break. Work experience students (Zia, Mahdi, Shawkat and Zabe), BISA volunteers, plus 60-70 bikes they helped recycle. [Photo: Bill Cowley]



Jan 2009: Sam Powrie (pictured), Brad and Mike, taking bikes to the Australian Refugee Association at Underdale. 3 trips in a 3 ton hire truck; 50 bikes per trip; plus a load or two with Sam's van & trailer (photo: Mike Brisco)