

Bikes for Refugees – report 2014 – on Adelaide Community Bicycle Workshop

(Note: Article originally posted on the Adelaide Cyclists website, a large community website for recreational cycling based in Adelaide. The Adelaide Cyclists website, had played a major role, in setting up Adelaide Community Bike Workshop in 2011. Bikes for Refugees was at that stage, operating from a private house, but after the workshop was set up, it transferred its activities there. At the time, the workshop was a separate entity, a public resource, which could be used by individual cyclists, and by cycling groups. The original intention of the workshop, was that it would be used by a range of cycling groups as a shared resource, and that they would take joint responsibility for operating the workshop. Over time it became apparent that this was not happening, as use was mainly by individuals only. Bikes for Refugees assumed responsibility for day to day managing the workshop, and also used it as its base. MJB, Dec 2015)

The workshop was set up to meet need from the Adelaide cycling community, for help to keep their bikes on the road, and to get bikes. It was set up 3 years ago by Jeremy Miller, Ianto Ware, and Angus Kingston, with a grant from the Conservation Council of SA / SA Govt, Sustainability and Community Grants Program. The grant funded purchase of tools and a shipping container as bike store. The founders approached a number of local councils looking for low cost premises, and eventually West Torrens City Council offered use of a room, plus container parking, free of charge, at Plympton Community Centre.

The Workshop aims to assist people in the Adelaide cycling community, with their needs for transport. It offers help to keep bikes on the road, and it offers secondhand bikes, at a low price, or even at no charge. It aims to help all who live in the community, particularly people in hardship. We aim to help in a humane way and without discrimination.

Many people and organisations use the workshop. From 2013-14, 21 community organisations and 198 individuals sought help.

Community organisations included schools (e.g Ashford Special School, Thebarton Senior College); Aboriginal organisations; welfare agencies/charities (e.g Anglicare, Red Cross, Baptist Care; Families SA for their clients); refugee organisations (eg Bikes for Refugees); Adelaide Fringe Festival; OPAL; City of Playford council; Charles Sturt council.

The 198 individual people, mostly wanted help with bike repair (135 repairs) and bike parts (64). Recipients come from all over the Adelaide area; 1 in 6 live in the City of West Torrens.

This financial year, the workshop will receive about 500 donated bikes – mostly donated by members of the public. In round figures: 400 will be put back on the road, given out free of charge to people in need; 70 provide parts to get other bikes going; 30 are sold to raise funds.

The goods & services the Workshop delivers to the community, add up to \$20,000 - \$22,000 a year, including free bikes, and bike repair. Work donated free of charge by volunteers, adds up to half a full-time position.

In the 3 years, numbers of bikes recycled, increased around 15% a year; numbers of jobs we are asked to do, increased around 20% a year.

The workshop consistently meets these needs, within the originally resources allocated by West Torrens Council. As need increased, we moved more from working indoors, to working outside in the car park, and purchasing extra tool kits. The workshop is certainly busy, but there is no problem, as

far as we can see, from it having outgrown its resources, or having become so big that the site no longer accommodates it.

In fact, the site suits the needs well. It is pleasant, safe for families with children; close to the Westside Bikeway; accessible by public transport; the car park is safe space for test riding.

People visiting might think we are just a bunch of cycling nuts, who like tinkering with bikes, which we happily give away to passers by. In fact, you generally can't just turn up to get a free bike – you will need a referral. That means, you must contact a recognised welfare agency (E.g Anglicare, Red Cross, Baptist Care, Migrant Resource Centre, FamiliesSA), and get your needs assessed first.

Mike Brisco – July 2014