

Bikes for Refugees scheme – notes on how the scheme operates – July 2011

Mike Brisco

The scheme's approach, is to accept bikes that are basically sound and can be got going again relatively easily, and then to put them back on the road as efficiently as possible. In this way, we supply 100-200 bikes a year, for refugees and their families, living in Adelaide.

For quality control/management, each bike on receipt, is given a unique reference number and tag, and its make, model, serial number, and donor are recorded. We can thus identify each bike individually and track it into the scheme, through, and to its final recipient. This information help keep track of bikes, and helps manage the scheme efficiently overall. It also means we can keep the public informed, of how we use the bikes that they give to us, where those bikes end up.

The checks and servicing, follow Bicycle Victoria's BikeEd guidelines.

Bikes received, are first checked, to decide whether they are worth servicing. Those that are too expensive or time consuming, are used for parts to fix up other bikes.

Bikes are washed, and tyres inflated to check that inner tubes are sound. Any inner tube that doesn't hold air is replaced with a new one.

Each bike is then given a 20 point workshop safety check incorporating a routine service. This checks parts work correctly, and identifies parts that are worn or not functioning. These are repaired or replaced.

We then add tyre sealant to the inner tubes, to reduce risk of punctures. This costs around \$3 per bike, and we have found this is effective, in keeping bikes on the road.

Each bike is then taken for a short test ride, to confirm safety and check for problems not apparent in the workshop (e.g pedals that are mis-aligned) . They are then stored for delivery.

In this way the scheme supplies 100-200 bikes a year to the community.

We are happy to give out bikes, free of charge, to any organisations helping people who have fled persecution. Most bikes go to the Australian Refugee Association who give the m out as part of the Settlement program. We have also receive requests from other organisations, including Red Cross, Families SA, and Baptist Care, for refugee families they are working with.

We inform recipients beforehand that all bikes are secondhand ; nevertheless, a few are perhaps disappointed, the bike they get, isn't a new one. We have developed our approach over several years, through considering how best to use time and funding, to help as many people as possible to try cycling. Our current approach is demand based, and enables us to meet that demand, which requires an output of 150-200 bikes a year. To provide only new bikes - or restore bikes fully (including repainting and replacing all worn parts) - would reduce that to 30-40.

Recipients generally have to buy their own locks and helmets. Helmets are of course a regulatory requirement. We accept any offered, but don't get enough, to satisfy demand. Bike theft is a large problem in Adelaide, especially opportunistic theft, of bikes left unlocked outside shops, or libraries. Again we get a few locks donated, but not enough to give out one per bike. Supplying helmets and locks with each bike would add several thousand dollars annually to the cost of the scheme - we would love to be able to do this, but currently don't have capacity to raise funds that size.

We hope most bikes will last long enough, for people to try cycling for a few months, and see how they like it. Like the rest of us - many refugees will try cycling here, but perhaps find they don't like it - unfamiliar road conditions, heavy traffic, scares from careless motorists, or physical effort. Those who do continue with it, can either maintain the bike themselves, or possibly purchase a new one.

The scheme raises funds, by offering a few bikes for sale, e.g on Ebay. These are generally higher quality bikes, older ones that most people wouldn't want to ride, but that are of interest to cycling enthusiasts, restorers, and collectors. For all these sale of one bike, provides parts to put several others back on the road.

The scheme has also for 3 years, offered part time employment, to support 1-2 young refugees at school/college. This is in the form of a Saturday afternoon job, or holiday job. The work provides an hourly pay rate, some experience of working with bikes, and a reference if required by other employers, and helps relieve the workload on BISA volunteers.

We also help community organisations, by fixing up bikes for bike events or bike courses

And we help the cycling community, by: providing a resource of parts; providing ready-to-ride second-hand bikes at reasonable price; and identifying suitable recipients, for bikes they no longer use, and wish to hand on to someone else.

Mike Brisco
8 July 2011