

## VICTORIAN BICYCLE COALITION (VBC) TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO PROGRESS IN RAIL REFORM.

Please accept this submission from the Victorian Bicycle Coalition (VBC). A Coalition that was set up to bring together 22 bicycle groups throughout Victoria for the purposes of:

- (a) promoting a culture favourable to the increased use of bicycles for all age groups;
- (b) ensuring that governments at state and local level develop sound bicycle policies and apply them in practice to create a fitter and healthier society and a more ecologically sustainable transport system;
- (c) seeking innovative, practical and effective means to improve accessibility by bicycle for single and multi modal journeys;
- (d) coordinating policy responses to current issues affecting cyclists, in the best interests of cyclists and cycling; national level.

The VBC is very interested in the Progress in Rail Reform discussion document. After reading the issues booklet, we are concerned that bicycle/rail travel has been completely overlooked. There is need to properly plan in advance for the carriage of bicycles on all rail services. We believe that rolling stock should be specifically designed to accommodate bicycles and secure bicycle storage should be given priority over car parking at rail stations. Bicycle riding in holiday areas has great potential as a form of eco-tourism and we also favour rail stations at touring destinations providing bicycle hire facilities as is done in so many of Europe's finest cities. Furthermore the carriage of bicycles should be free as it is for sporting goods to stimulate the demand for bike rail travel.

While it is easy to take bikes on Melbourne suburban trains at no cost (except in the rush hour) and the cost of taking bicycles on trains to rural Victoria is moderate, it is prohibitively expensive to travel interstate. Carriage of a bicycle to Adelaide, for instance, is two thirds of the cost of the carriage of a car.

Because the performance of Melbourne railways is so poor (see BFA submission chart 4 and text) there is plenty of room for bicycles to be carried on trains at present. However, if more trains were fully loaded in the rush hour there would be a greater need for the secure storage of bicycles at rail stations. Cyclists like other rail users are interested in faster and more frequent services and if that meant there was less physical room for the carriage of bicycles then we would need far more bicycle lockers and lock-up bicycle cages, which we believe should be free. ( See appendix A of the BFA submission for further details.)

Victorian cyclists often travel interstate by air with bicycles carried as accompanying baggage and many cyclists are frustrated by not being convenient to travel interstate by train with their bicycles. Central stations are very conveniently situated for cyclists but often there is no room on the train for bicycles, or it costs a great deal. What we would like to see is the following.

1. Common conditions across state boundaries (making the best conditions general, not averaging the dreadful systems in some states!
2. Increased usability of trains for bicyclists, including the restoration of luggage vans on normal services.
3. Sprinters, XPT and other trains refitted to accommodate bicycles, prams and wheelchairs in sufficient numbers. The existing maximum of two per train is quite unrealistic because it reflects average loading, not the usual peaks of demand. We note that in the Netherlands special two decker carriages that carry 50 bicycles on the lower deck are used in the summer months on express trains going from the NW of the Netherlands in a SE direction across Belgium. If bicycle riding is to be promoted as a serious form of eco-tourism then in the long term then bike/rail travel must be catered for.
- 4- Restoration of the passenger rail network. Much of the reduction in size of the Victorian network appears to reflect an unwillingness to maintain bridges on the system. Combined with the similar neglect of bridges on minor roads, this makes much of eastern Victoria (for instance) virtually out-of-bounds to cyclists.
5. Provision, by all rail authorities, of secure, long-term storage for bicycles at railway stations. Such facilities should meet the requirements of the Australian Standard AS 2890.- 1993. Low security racks that are totally unsuitable for long term parking at rail stations are not a substitute.

We support the following statement in the BFA submission:

"We support the Vaile Inquiry Report overall recommendations for greater levels of rail investment and present the case for better intermeddle integration of urban rail systems which was not considered in any depth by the Vaile Inquiry because it focussed on inter-city freight and passenger traffic. We argue that world best practice for rail systems should go beyond narrow operational considerations. There is a need to consider how rail systems that greatly encourage bike/rail travel can best contribute to world best practice in progress towards ESD".

John Harland President Victorian Bicycle Coalition