



Dr Cranky's

# Bikes for kids – Bicycle Recycling at School

*Lessons from the first three years of Flemington Primary School's "Bicycle Hospital"-*

[www.facebook.com/BicycleHospital/](http://www.facebook.com/BicycleHospital/) - written August 2016

A bike for every child - recycling bikes in the school community so all kids can have a working bike that fits them.

## The Problem

When Ride2School day rolled around at Flemington Primary we were looking at ways to get more people participating. We have a lot of recent migrant arrivals that were not riding or walking from nearby so were especially looking for ways to engage with them. We realised there was a problem and looked for a solution.

1. Many school children don't have access to a properly working bike. Either:
  - a. they don't have a bike for various reasons
    - i. parents can't afford one
    - ii. they lost their bike or it has been stolen
    - iii. parents won't get them one because it might get stolen
  - b. their existing bike has become too small (they've out grown it)
  - c. their existing bike is in need of repairs or is not rideable
2. There are many unused bikes in the school and local community. Many of these are sitting in garages and backyards rusting away. This may be because:
  - a. Children have outgrown them or stopped using them
  - b. They've fallen into disrepair and it's too much bother to get them fixed

## The Solution

We decided to trial a program at school where people can get their bikes fixed, donate bikes, swap bikes or, if needed, receive a bike. This would allow recycling of bikes within the school community while also building support for riding in the school and building the school community itself. It also gave us, as Dad's a useful activity to be involved in at school.

## At the Flemington Primary School

At the Flemington Primary School, we saw many run down bikes at Ride2School day or in the bike shed. We decided to help fix bikes in the lead up to the day and noticed that many kids did not have a bike while people were telling us they had unused bikes at home. Putting two and two together we developed the concept of the recycling bike shed which the students, as part of a naming competition, called the Bicycle Hospital.

We started from an idea, decided to give it a try and were amazed by the success. Here are some things we found out that may be useful to you. Each school will be different so feel free to adjust or refine as you see fit.

[Start around an event](#) – we used an upcoming Ride2School Day to launch the program as a way of fixing kids bikes so they could participate on the day. There may be other events that you can piggy back on.



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**Be visible** – Find a place for the “workshop” where most people can see you as they come and go from school or congregate for school assembly. On the edge of the school quadrangle or beside the entrance to the school hall perhaps. Announce yourself at school assembly and let people know what you are doing, where you will be and at what times.

**Be regular** – pick a regular time and turn up so you are seen and have a regular presence. Weekly seems to be good. At Flemington we picked Friday as it worked for the organisers who had that day free. And, being the last day of the week it meant we could distribute bikes ready for riding on the weekend. It started very slowly with a couple of bikes being fixed (including our own and our children) but gradually built. After a few months we'd handled over 30 bikes.

**Communicate regularly** - Part of being visible and regular (two marketing strategies) is having regular content and reminders in the school newsletter or communications. A story of interest each week with a picture of a happy “customer” and progress (e.g. number of bikes given out) makes it interesting. You can use this to thank donators and sponsors too.

**Find partners and support**– find support from the school principal, school council and student representatives and match up with school activities if possible such as Ride2School Day or Recumbent Bike. Talk to local shops, including the local bike shop for support. They can provide support in return for signage or acknowledgement in the newsletter. The bike shop may be able to offer discounted prices on parts and tools. The local lions club, Council and Bendigo Bank were helpful to Flemington along with a local café. We also partnered with a RedCross bicycle recycling program that needed adult bikes but had excess child bikes. We had the opposite problem so were able to help each other.

**Tag the bikes as they come in** – a basic tagging system allows you to keep tabs on when the bike came in, what needs fixing, who donated it and when it went back out and who it went to.

**Keep a list of children wanting bikes** – this goes with the above tagging. When a bike comes in that suits an awaiting child or visa versa then both tags go on the bike and you know it's a match.

**Take all donations** – you should not be picky about which bikes you receive. Many people don't know the difference between a junk bike and a jewel. Thank them all as they are making a contribution. Even if it comes from hard rubbish.

**Don't keep junk** – if you are not ruthless then you will soon find yourself overwhelmed by lots of bikes that are never going to be fixed. Sort them early and if the bike can't be made roadworthy or is so rusted that no child will want it then salvage useable parts and throw it in the bin. Even if you may receive junk it does not mean you have to keep it or use it.

**Start small** – you can get started with a basic tool kit and some spare parts. Other, more expensive and less commonly used tools and parts can wait until you need them.

**Starter Tool kit** - a multi-tool (3,4,5,6 Allen keys, Philips and flat head screwdriver, 13,14,15 spanners, a pump (foot pump if possible).

**Starter spare parts** – brake and gear inner cables; brake pads, tubes (20”; 26”, 700cc), patch kit.



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[Find a place to store your stuff](#) – once you get started you'll need somewhere to leave bikes, tools and parts. Take what you can get as close to your working space. An undercover space is also welcome for working in the rain.

[Raise funds where you can](#) – Pretty soon you'll need some money for parts and tools. We suggested donations for fixing bikes and sell excess adult and kids bikes to parents or on Gumtree or Ebay. Every bit of cash helps to buy parts and tools and become more self-sustainable. We have not yet applied for any grants.

[Connect with people](#) – the bike workshop is a great way to connect with people in the school community, especially those who you would not normally meet. For instance, Dad's or families from different socio-economic groups. It's a great way of connecting people in a different way around a non-confronting, friendly activity – fixing bikes.

For more information, contact Bart Sbeghen at Dr Cranky's. Bart is looking to pilot and develop the Dr Cranky's program to get more kids riding. The program will include Bicycle Recycling at School.

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See [www.drcrankys.com.au](http://www.drcrankys.com.au)