

BENEFITS OF BIKE RIDING

NORTHERN residents like John and Valerie Fletcher are getting back on their bikes and improving their well-being thanks to assistance from the Cycle Salisbury Social Rides Program.



John and Valerie Fletcher

The City of Salisbury, through the Healthy Communities Initiative 'Living Well in the Living City' Program, has partnered with Bicycle SA to get the community excited about cycling. In a first of its kind for South Australia, the Cycle Salisbury program aims to create a more active and healthy community by encouraging people to get back on their bikes.

The Fletchers are in their mid-to-late 60s and have seven grandchildren. John works in the printing industry while Valerie is a retired nurse and midwife. "After retiring from a busy and demanding profession I wanted to remain active and improve my health with exercise," Valerie said. "We saw an advert in the newspaper looking for those interested in cycle maintenance and preparing to ride and decided we would participate. As we age it often becomes easy to slow down and lose fitness. Belonging to a group like Cycle Salisbury gives added incentive to get up and get moving."

Prior to participating in Cycle Salisbury the Fletchers occasionally rode with family and travelled up to 10km. "Our fitness has improved and now we ride 20km to 30km regularly," Valerie said. "We enjoy the social interaction and coffee stops en-route, our cycling skills have improved and we are able to do basic maintenance on our bikes. Other forms of exercise can be costly, but once you have a bike the cost is nil."

Cycling offers many benefits. Apart from being a great way to get around, cycling can increase stamina and physical fitness, improve cardiovascular health and contribute to weight loss. Cycling is also a great social activity to do with family or a group such as the Cycle Salisbury Social Rides Program. Cycling also has environmental and economic benefits.

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The Cycle Salisbury program started with an extensive community engagement phase where a number of barriers to cycling (both real and perceived) were identified. To address these barriers, Council in partnership with Bike SA developed five programs that were implemented in 2012/13 to get the community cycling and work towards long term behaviour change. One of these programs was Ride Leader training and the establishment of a low level group rides program (to address the barrier of not knowing where to ride or having anyone to ride with).

To date, 10 Bike SA Volunteer Ride Leaders have been trained and the Cycle Salisbury Social Rides Program was launched in September 2013.

The rides are short (10km to 20km) and low level (no or few hills) along local trails or roads and in most cases allow for a social cuppa afterwards. Future rides will include family rides as well as exploring other parts of Adelaide. People living outside Salisbury are also encouraged to enjoy Salisbury's parks and trails and join the Cycle Salisbury Social Rides program. All the Cycle Salisbury Social Rides are part of the official Bike SA Rides Program.

The Cycle Salisbury Social Rides program is proving popular with locals and has helped participants improve both their confidence and fitness. Novice / beginner riders are welcome and are catered for on certain rides by having looped routes and experienced "tail-end charlie's" so that even if you can only ride 5km, you can still get involved and feel supported. Our philosophy is that everybody is welcome and 'no one gets left behind'.



For more information on the Cycle Salisbury program visit www.salisbury.sa.gov.au/cyclesalisbury or contact the Healthy Communities Team on 8406 8251.