

Chip puts pedal to the metal for productivity

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Productivity

WHENEVER there is a morning queue outside the showers at BHP Billiton's Melbourne headquarters the chances are you will find the boss of the world's biggest miner at his desk still dressed in his lycra cycling kit.

Chip Goodyear, 49, is one of the growing 4700-strong army of workers who brave rush hour and local weather to cycle to work in Melbourne every day, and big business is seeking to tap into the growing popularity of cycling as a way of boosting morale and productivity.

"It is a great way to start and to finish the day," Mr Goodyear told the launch of national Ride-to-Work Day in Melbourne yesterday. "When you are in good shape you feel better and when you feel better your are going to be more effective in what you do," he said.

Bicycle Victoria is hoping for more than 60,000 people to participate in the first national Ride-to-Work Day on October 17, with 2600 workplaces registered.

Mr Goodyear, an American who moved to Melbourne in 1999 when he joined BHP, said he initially took up cycling on the weekends, but found it ate into time he would rather spend with his children. So instead he started riding to work. He now rides a 32km round trip almost every work day he is in Melbourne.

And Mr Goodyear isn't the only one doing it. BHP this year has been forced to expand its underground bicycle parking from 31 to 54. ANZ's head of retail banking Brian Hartzler rides to work a couple of times a week while his boss, CEO John McFarlane, takes to the pedals a couple

of times a month. ANZ has about 80 bike parking spaces at its Melbourne headquarters and is installing 270 places at its new building in Docklands that will be finished in 2009.

More than an estimated 4700 people ride bikes into Melbourne's CBD each day, up 3.9 per cent on a year ago. Peak weekday morning bike volumes on the city's off-road bike paths are up 20 per cent from a year ago. But some are concerned that the rising numbers of pedal-powered commuters could add to road congestion. While supportive of Ride-To-Work day, the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria wants road-cycling commuters to be funnelled into designated access roads, leaving main arterial roads to the vehicle.

Bicycle Victoria Harry Barber said cycling to work was a perfect way to squeeze exercise into busy schedules. "A lot of us are losing the battle with our waistslines, we are losing out at the petrol pump and we are losing out on our time, but with ride-to-work it's a chance to turn around all those losses and make them into gains," Mr Barber said.

Citing research from Medibank Private that healthy workers were three times more effective than unhealthy workers, he said riding to work boosted productivity.

But to encourage cycling he said corporates need to ensure not only sufficient parking for bicycles, but also adequate showers and lockers for cyclists to use.

And with a hopeful eye on the upcoming election, Mr Barber called on the Government and Labor to stomp up with some incentives for businesses to put in place the facilities to encourage more people to ride to work.



Pedal power: Chip Goodyear commuting to work on his bike in Melbourne yesterday. Picture: David Geraghty