

# Clean, green electro bike

What if you want to take steps towards self-sufficiency, sustainability or a simpler life? In Your World, journalist

**Virginia Winder** meets people who are seeking solutions and living the change.

**H**energy sweeps into the room with e-bike man Jace Hobbs as if he is wearing an invisible cloak of the stuff.

In his case, the "stuff" can only be electricity and he is pedalling it to New Zealand.

The tall, lean, bright-eyed man from Nelson is the founder of the Electric Bike Hub and he is trying to convert others to the zero-emission style of transportation.

Yes. Your World has already written about e-bikes, but the focus of this feature is all about conversion – the metamorphosis of your old pedal-pusher into electric beast. Perhaps we've found another definition for the word transmutation?

In New Plymouth last Thursday, Jace ran a workshop on the subject at Puke Ariki and the night before he held a talk on the topic.

Before facing the public for the Hive Taranaki events, Jace gets a media warmup and starts conservatively.

"You can start considering electric bike use for the fun," he says with enthusiasm.

"This is a very pleasant and mildly thrilling activity."

Steered back on to the subject of powering up your old cycle, Jace explains that some people may go for this option because they love the bike they have and "it fits you to a tee" and "you understand the workings of your own bike better".

Also, people who already use their bikes for commuting may face significant impediments on the way, like windy stretches and big hills, and may no longer want to arrive at work in a sweat.

They may also want a speedy journey to work.

"It's so satisfying to beat traffic on your normal commute."

"You are likely to get there faster than anyone in a car," he says.

A person thinking about converting may also have a bike they use for special purposes. Jace knows of a cycling icecream vendor who converted to an e-bike and he says other people with disabilities may have a cycle made for their needs.

"For those sorts of reasons, you would improve your experience on your own bike by converting it."

There are also a number of people with artful character e-bikes that appeal to Jace's imagination.

"I have seen some that look like little carriages with lanterns on the side. They look so festive – perfect for a parade."

Tandem e-bikes are another idea and Jace has also been contacted by people from derby clubs, who are keen to convert their racers to electric mode.



Photos: CAMEO

## THE SPECS

An eZee e-bike conversion kit includes:

- Rear or front wheel hub motor, which fits into a serviceable bag holder.
- One 10-amp hour lithium battery.
- Controller and all the hardware.
- Cost \$1790.

## THE LINKS

electricbikehub.co.nz  
hivevietnami.com  
electricbikes.co.nz  
theelectriccycle.co.nz

## the facts

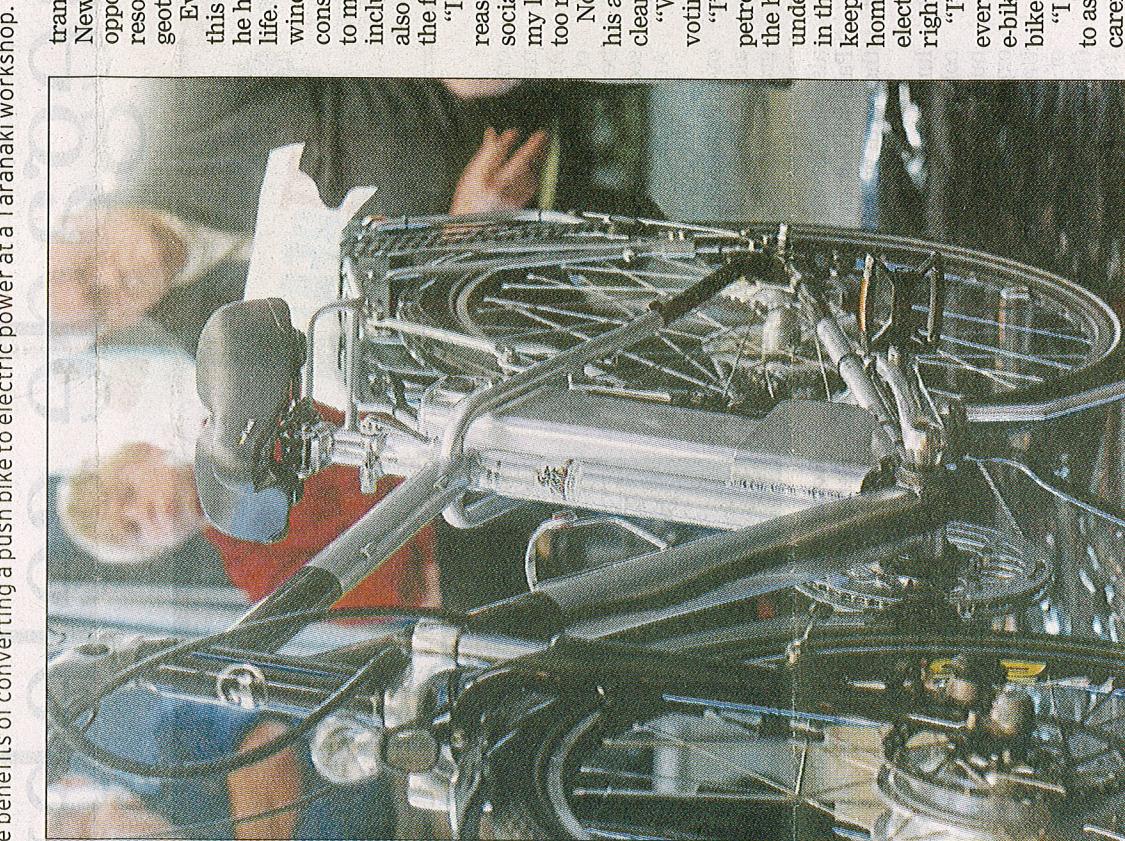
1. Yes, you can still get fit riding an e-bike. You can pedal as much as you like, but if you want an extra push up hill, you can turn to your throttle.
2. The New Zealand law says that runs on 300 watts or less is classified as a bicycle and can be used on cycleways.
3. In Europe, there is a 250-watt e-bikes. Anything above that is as a moped and needs to be used on roads.
4. The motors have the option of engaging an electric limiter, which not assist a cycle when the speed over 25kmh. If that's off, the bike can go as fast as the wheel speed can go – that 300 wattage, which is typical between 30kmh and 31kmh.
5. Jace Hobbs says he once got his e-bike up to a speed of 38kmh.

**Pedal shock:** A example of a converted electric bicycle.

get to their destination. This is not a greenie issue."

Councils around the country are also looking at e-bikes. "There is a significant uptake of electric bike technology and they are seeing how they can avoid road extensions, congestions and parking issues."

Jace believes the future of



**Listen here:** Jace Hobbs explains the benefits of converting a push bike to electric power at a Taranaki workshop.

"They are planning to use these as commutes, so you are going to start seeing some really inventive, Kiwi-style types of conversions."

He is not talking about carts decorated as rocket ships and mountains, but three-wheeled speed machines that will still fall under the bicycle umbrella. People who convert their bicycles will also have a "mild investment decrease" over those who buy a new e-bike.

In other words, converting to a 300-watt machine is not cheap. The entire kit – and here Jace will declare his hand as New Zealand's eZee distributor – costs \$1790. A new e-bike costs between \$2400 and \$3000.

The American from Hawaii says one of the marvels of the conversion kit is the electronic controller that comes with it. "It's a controller that can handle the kind of wattage and the kind of loads that one could expect for institutional use, not just mum and dad use," the 57-year-old says. "You could load your bike down with anything. You could even move your house with it."

Here, an absurd image of an e-bike pulling a house on a trailer appears in the writer's mind. Of course, he is talking about moving the contents of a house.

"There's a group in Australia who get together on their e-bikes and help their mates move house with little bike trailers and clever panniers. This is a zero-emission house-moving operation."

Others have chosen e-machines for economics and convenience. "The users I'm most impressed with are the ones who are making significant improvements to their own

"I'm not here to tell everyone to convert to e-bikes – I'm a push-bike rider as well."

"I encourage people to assess the benefits carefully and when they really, overwhelmingly stack up for the conversions, then do that."

"A good start is for anyone interested in an e-bike conversion to get on the seat of a quality e-bike and see if it feels right to them. If it does, then go with it. Feel the power," he says.



**VIRGINIA WINDER**

of a cycling icecream vendor who converted to an e-bike and he says other people with disabilities may have a cycle made for their needs.

"For those sorts of reasons, you would improve your experience on your own bike by converting it."

There are also a number of people with artful character e-bikes that appeal to Jace's imagination.

"I have seen some that look like little carriages with lanterns on the side. They look so festive – perfect for a parade."

Tandem e-bikes are another idea and Jace has also been contacted by people from derby clubs, who are keen to convert their racers to electric mode.