Name: Kelly Moss

Date: December 2011

I participated in a Living Smart Course in Fremantle at the end of 2011. I was looking forward to learning more about how I could live more sustainably in my own home and to meeting other people that were motivated to create change on a local level. Our group was very diverse with people of all ages and backgrounds which made for some interesting sharing and conversations.

In about the fifth week of the course we covered the Travel Smart section and this had a fairly profound impact on me. During one of the activities it became very obvious to me that many of the trips I made by car were within a 5km radius of my home and could easily be done using public transport, walking or cycling. We discussed barriers to using active transport and it dawned on me that my biggest barrier to not cycling to work, shops etc was that I did not own a bike! I had been looking for ways to incorporate more physical activity into my life and it was like a light bulb going off – *get yourself a bike and start commuting on two wheels!*

With Christmas fast approaching I decided to invest in myself and the environment and I bought myself a lovely new blue bike. Full of the joys of two-wheeled freedom I started cycling to work a few times a week and riding to the shops instead of taking the car. I was generally impressed with the network of cycle paths that I could take instead of having to share the road with cars which I have always been nervous about. I also loved seeing my local streets from a completely new perspective and getting some exercise at the same time.

During the Christmas holidays I was faced with the dilemma of having to get to a friend’s holiday house just south of Mandurah. My partner was driving down there a few days before me and it seemed silly for me to then take my car as well. I then thought I could perhaps catch the train to Mandurah and get someone to pick me up from there. And then…another Light Bulb moment…I could do the trip on my bike! I had only been riding for a few weeks so the thought of riding the whole way made my bottom tremble with fear. So I planned my trip – cycle to the train station, train to Mandurah, then cycle the last 25km to the holiday house – perfect! I was excited and motivated about my big adventure.

As I was packing my backpack with as little as possible I was tossing up what sustenance I would need for my journey. The words of my Living Smart Facilitator Tim suddenly came flooding back to me – if you were taking a trip by bicycle you might need something like a vegemite sandwich to fuel you for the journey. If you feed your car a vegemite sandwich for the same trip it wouldn’t even make it out of the driveway! So much of the energy used when driving a car is actually required for moving the car itself – not you. So when you say you are taking your car to the shops, you really are taking your car!

So I quickly whipped myself up a vegemite sandwich and off I trundled on the first leg of my journey to the train station. This was a good ride with great cycle paths and I arrived about 5 minutes before the train. I hopped on board, got myself and my trusty stead comfortable, and sat back to enjoy my vegemite sandwich on the smooth, comfortable train ride to Mandurah.

When I arrived in Mandurah I knew the general direction I needed to head in to get on the main road to the holiday house. I weaved my way through the back streets and then hit the main drag. I was pleased to find a cycle path just off the main road which was great as I was concerned about being on the road with cars traveling quickly. I hadn’t factored in the very stiff sea breeze that I peddled into pretty much the whole way which made the trip fairly challenging. But it was great being out in the open air and saying hi to fellow cyclists along the way. Nearly clipping a dugite on the path certainly woke me up and had me peddling faster as I approached my destination.

As I pulled into the holiday house I received some cheers from my friends who all thought I was a little crazy. I was pretty exhausted but very proud of myself for making the effort. It made me realize how dependant we are on our cars and how easy it can be to break the habit. The benefits I have felt since getting my bike have been fantastic and I can only encourage more people to take up the two wheel challenge!