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Injuries on rise as more cyclists enter city

Bike lobby group 'compromised'

By **CLAY LUCAS**
and **JASON DOWLING**

MORE cyclists are being injured in central Melbourne as riding into the city booms, figures show.

And a transport expert has said that bike lobby group Bicycle Victoria is compromised because it takes money from the Government's roads department and motoring groups.

Thousands of Melburnians will today cycle in Ride to Work Day, organised by Bicycle Victoria and sponsored by VicRoads and the RACV. They will gather at workplaces all over Melbourne, and thousands will converge on Federation Square for a mass breakfast.

Melbourne City Council's annual *Bicycle Account* report,

also out today, shows a rise in riders injured in the city centre since 2005, when there were 155 serious accidents.

In 2006 it dropped to 144, but last year, as cyclist numbers soared to 8600 a day, there were 168 serious incidents. In the first six months of 2008 there were 88 injuries.

The report nominates the most dangerous routes as Swanston Street and St Kilda Road.

Cycling remains a marginal activity in Melbourne, with the 2006 census showing 1.3% rode to work, up from 1% in 2001.

The Brumby Government spent \$72 million over 10 years on cycling programs and infrastructure, Roads Minister Tim Pallas said, "the biggest injection of funds to cycling in Victoria's history".

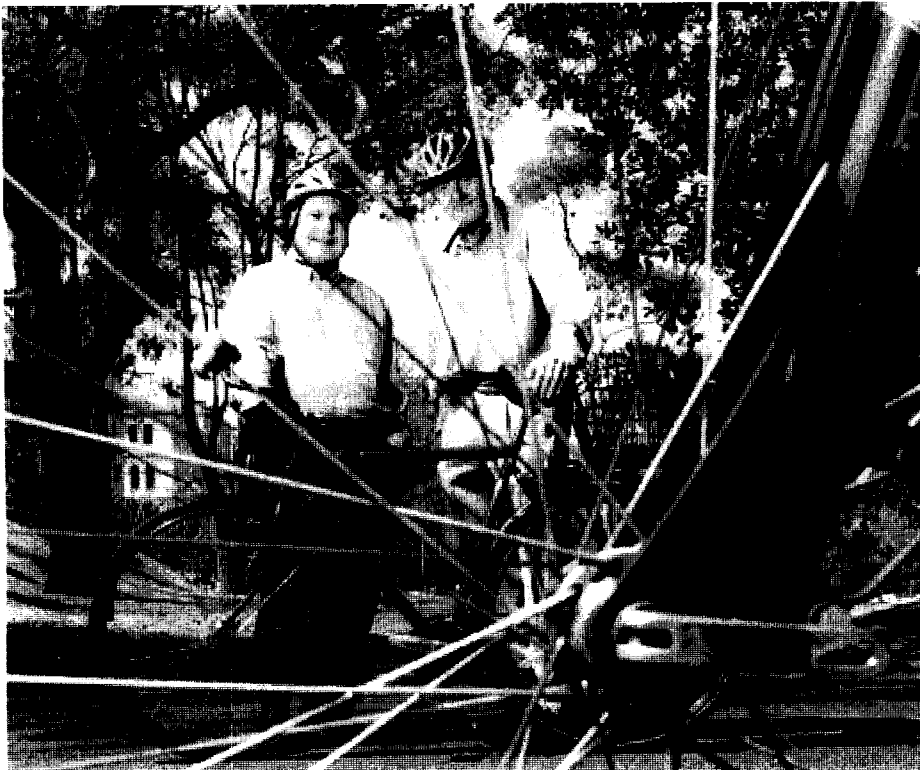
But Melbourne University's

transport research centre head Professor Nick Low said this was too low. "We need to spend \$100 million a year on cycling infrastructure," he said.

Across Victoria last year, 490 cyclists were seriously injured and three killed. Bicycle Victoria — with 40,000 members and revenue last year of \$7.6 million — did not advocate enough for bike safety, Professor Low said.

In most cases around Melbourne, bike lanes were unsafe, and the group was too reliant on the Government for funding, he said. "It means VicRoads dictates what Bicycle Victoria can advocate on."

Bicycle Victoria chief executive Harry Barber defended his group's role: "Our mission is get more people cycling more often. Our mission is not to advocate to Government."



Roads Minister Tim Pallas (left) and Harry Barber of Bicycle Victoria will ride to work today. The bike lobby group's close relationship with the State Government has come under fire. Picture: Rebecca Hallas

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