

# New bicycle storage products

## How Australian business can help cyclists and make money, too

Many cyclists are their own worst enemies: until they have a bicycle stolen, they do not acknowledge the need for secure bicycle parking. ALAN PARKER estimates the value of bicycles stolen in Australia each year is around \$30 million and, in this article, suggests what can be done to reduce the toll.

**T**HE thirty million dollar annual theft bill is why secure bicycle storage needs to be a planning requirement. Just as car parking is provided automatically for all new buildings and offices, so should secure bicycle parking facilities, and also whenever buildings are renovated or extended.

Government needs to help business help cyclists. If planning regulations made bicycle parking mandatory, there would be a guaranteed market for bicycle storage products, stimulating their manufacture. This is what has happened in Japan and now happens in the Netherlands. In Australia, however, only an old-style entrepreneur — with enough faith in his product to incur "start up" losses beyond what business prudence allows — would put a bicycle parking product on the market. It is time state bicycle committees and local government started buying local manufacturers' products and assisting in designing and developing better products. Good people are needed to implement the motherhood statements in the National Bicycle Strategy about providing bicycle parking — action is the name of the game.

In a recent international survey of bicycle storage facilities undertaken in the Netherlands, there were 33 manufacturers listed, 68 distinct products illustrated and hundreds more variations on these designs. However, while literally hundreds of bicycle parking products are available internationally, we have too few good products here in Australia. This sorry state of affairs can be expected to continue unless governments act and planning and building regulations change.

Here, I review three "state of the art" bicycle parking products. One is available now, another is easily copied and the other could be partly imported. Each satisfies a niche need for bicycle security.

**RIGHT:** Canadian two-sided rack ideal for short term parking for up to 8 bicycles

### Low cost 8-bike rack from Canada

Public transport advocate, Ray Walford, took the photograph below in Vancouver. It shows a two-sided rack that allows a U-lock to be used to secure the front wheel and frame. This rack is ideal for short term parking in public places where five or more bicycles need to be parked together. It would also be suitable for long term parking in a secure enclosure with controlled access. It would complement "U" racks which are ideal for parking one or two bicycles in confined spaces such as narrow footpaths.

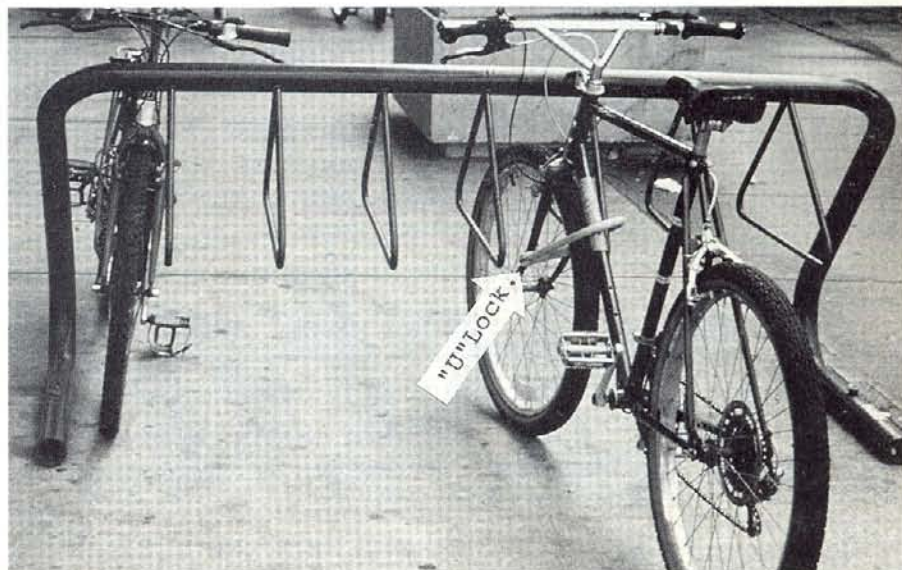
Installation costs would be low as only 2 fixing bolts are required. A version of this design would have the two downtubes 500 mm below ground set in concrete blocks. The tubular construction is clean with a good finish. Rust-proofing is possible because the round tube is available with a zinc coating, specifically designed as a smooth undercoat for paint. The rack's style, colour and finish would match those of good

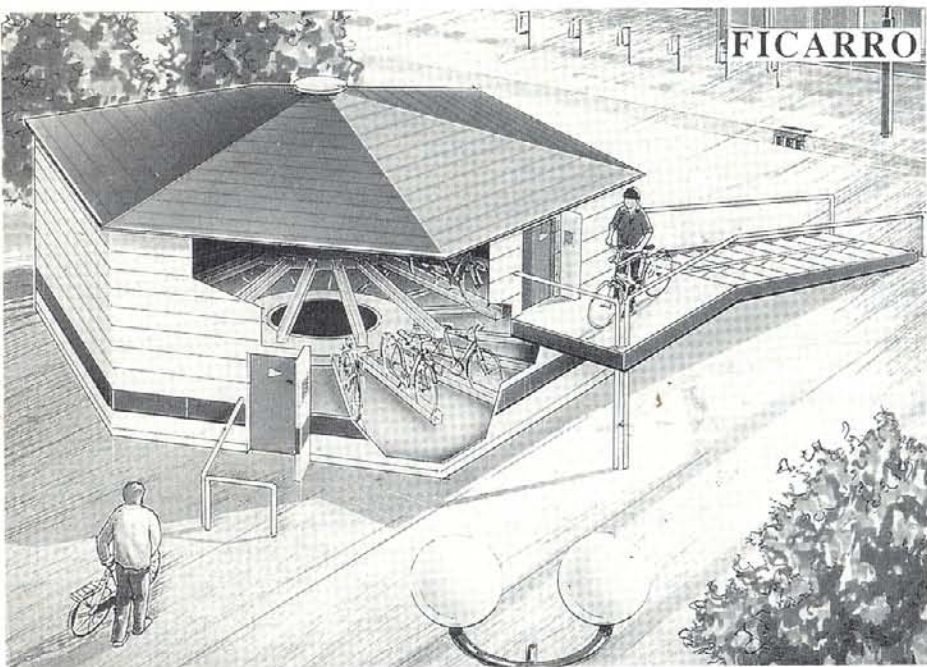
quality U-racks available from Bicycle Victoria.

### "Ficarro" automatic shelter for 88 bicycles, from the Netherlands

The Ficarro operates like two great rotary slide projectors — 9 metres in diameter stacked one above the other — with bicycles being loaded at two levels. Access to the shelter requires a coded card, bought from a rail ticket office or vending machine. When the cyclist punches in the code on a panel next to the entrance door, a bicycle-holding device slides out and, after the bike has been correctly secured, retracts into the Ficarro. To retrieve the bike, the cyclist punches in the code and in 10 seconds the bike pops out.

Readers may know of Japan's bicycle shelters that use automated warehousing technology to store from 300 to 2000 bicycles. While it has many of the features of the bigger automatic shelters, the "Ficarro" stores up to 88 bicycles and is more likely to find an application in Australia where the urban density is much lower than in Japan.





The Ficarro is ideal at locations such as principal railway stations, where theft is a problem and there are over 40 regular users with potential for more. Bicycle lockers are a better solution when there are less than 40 users at, for example, an unstaffed station. The lockers can be moved elsewhere if replaced by a Ficarro when demand grows.

Ficarro is completely automatic, does not require an attendant and can be used 24 hours a day. In the Netherlands cyclists pay a dollar a day and additional income is derived from advertising on the outside. The interior rotating storage mechanism is independent of the outside shell which can be varied to suit different locations. The operating system is protected against electrical failure and acts of vandalism.

These units are not cheap, as might be guessed from the photograph of the interior mechanism. However, the installations pay for themselves in direct income and, by preventing bike theft, they also encourage rail patronage. As more of these units are

used in the Netherlands, there will come a time when it will be possible to import the interior mechanism in a knocked-down state with the controls, while making the bulky exteriors here. Who knows, maybe they could be made under licence?

### The "LOCcycl" coin-in-slot parking unit, made in Victoria

There are four LOCcycl models available, making it a versatile, practical choice for use by private companies or public agencies to hire or lease, exclusively for bicycle parking or as part of a bicycle and motor vehicle parking service.

The photograph showing two "LOCcycl" units illustrates the new coin-in-the-slot model at the Chadstone shopping centre. The other LOCcycl photograph shows the large hardened bolt in the closed position that locks the front wheel and the frame. Note that the owner of the expensive bike with quick-release wheels and saddle stem has used a U-lock to secure the rear wheel and taken off the saddle. Using your own U-



LEFT: Ficarro automatic bicycle storage  
ABOVE: Australian-made LOCcycl

lock, cable or chain to secure the back wheel to your helmet and a rear stay is the best way to use the LOCcycl (though helmets locked to bikes are prone to vandalism—Ed).

As well as the coin-in-the-slot model there is a "coin-for-key" model like the typical luggage locker. On returning the key is turned to unlock the bolt. Another unit is designed so that the key or a combination lock can be leased; if the user defaults on the monthly or quarterly fee, the LOCcycl owner can change the lock.

For owners who do not want to charge users, another model allows the coin to be returned to the user when the key is used to unlock the locking bolt.

The four models are very useful in places with a human presence or electronic surveillance but unsuited to isolated locations where thieves can use flame or abrasive cutting devices with little chance of detection. Though arguably as secure as some Australian bicycle lockers — whose poor locking devices can be removed by bolt cutter or the lock easily picked — LOCcycls in isolated spots still allow a bike to be stripped.

In appropriate locations, the LOCcycl has a great future in Australia. A trial installation in Europe paid for itself in one year. Each LOCcycl averaged one guilder (75c) a pop, four times a day. Over 5,000 of these units are expected to be installed this financial year in Belgium and 25,000 in the Netherlands.

The Australian contact for LOCcycl is Ray Hodges on (03) 380 2410. Bayly Motors imports the coin-in-the-slot mechanism but the rest is made in Brunswick.