



## CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 77

# Tandems require teamwork

The popularity of tandem bicycles appears to be growing with a greater number of two, three or more riders seen pedalling the one bike along our roads and paths.

The key to tandem riding is obviously teamwork. The front rider, called the pilot, does all the steering. The rear rider, called the stoker, acts more as the motor since they do not have to put any energy into actually controlling the bike.

Tandems are remarkably fast over flat terrain (easily cruising at 50 km/h), because they have double the pedalling power of a standard single bicycle and produce only slightly more wind resistance. They are a bit more difficult to pedal uphill due to additional weight and the difficulty in standing out of the saddle to increase power.

On most tandems, the two sets of cranks are mechanically linked by the chain and turn at the same rate. This means both riders must agree on a cadence or pedalling speed. Some independently-driven tandems have come on the market, but they tend to be very expensive.



Tandem riding turns a basically solitary activity into mutual experience that can be shared by others and a local group of vision-impaired riders confirm that point.

WA Tandem Cycling Advisory Council hosts weekly and monthly rides leaving from the Association for the Blind of WA headquarters in Victoria Park that vary in distance from 20 and 70 kilometres.

According to Council president Adriana Lepore, any tandem team needs to be on excellent speaking terms, but blind stokers require some extra clues from their captains such as upcoming hills and turns.

"If I don't know that I'm in for a one-kilometre climb and the captain doesn't tell me, I might give everything in the 500 metres and have nothing left for the rest," she explained.

"Tandem riding is a great way to stay fit and it is very freeing, because you're outside, propelling yourself at speed and experiencing the wind."

***This fact sheet is one of a series dealing with the use of bicycles for recreation and transport in Western Australia. The series looks at a range of cycling-related topics including ride routes, touring tips, maintenance, safety, road rules, insurance and product reviews. It is not to be construed as the provision of legal advice or advice about insurance products.***

Bikewest  
Department of Transport  
441 Murray Street, Perth WA 6000  
Tel: (08) 9216 8000  
Fax: (08) 9216 8497  
Email: [cycling@transport.wa.gov.au](mailto:cycling@transport.wa.gov.au)