

# Cycling for sustainability

By Rachel Palmer

CYCLING and drama may seem unlikely partners in the push for environmental awareness, but the two have become powerful allies, inspiring school children across the country.

The Otesha Project (Australia) is a grassroots youth organisation using theatre to empower young people to do what they can to be more sustainable and aware of social justice issues. The work is taken to schools via pushbikes.

Otesha's Cycling for Sustainability tours aim to help participants who travel to regional schools gain experience to become environmental role models, inspiring their audiences in the process. The project now needs 40 participants for two six-week cycle tours. One travels from Brisbane to Newcastle from November 15 to December 22, and the other rides from Melbourne to Adelaide from January 18 to March 1 next year.

Project director Angela Jones says it doesn't matter if volunteers are not super-confident bike riders, or accomplished performers - all sorts of skills are needed on the tours (which have easier bike riding days at the start!).

"You need to be able to hop on a bike. You don't have to be a

cyclist," she says.

Angela, who grew up in Stawell, says young people in the regional areas who see the performances can often "feel really alone" in terms of knowing how to make a difference.

The tours explore sustainability, media communication, leadership, acting and communal living as part of a roving cycling community.

"You gain hope and inspiration from other people you're with. You realise there are a lot of wonderful things that are happening," Angela explains.

Otesha co-director Shane Bill says the message is "about making small changes". Otesha aims not to preach, and instead encourages young people to make decisions about what they think they can do to bring about change.

"People can think in their own minds about what they can do, because no one can do everything," Angela says.

"If you want to make a difference and have fun and empower other young people it's a really good opportunity."

The application deadline for tour participants is August 15, 2008.

For information about applying, visit the Otesha website at [www.otesha.org.au/biketours/](http://www.otesha.org.au/biketours/)



**On your bike:** The Otesha Project (Australia) is a grassroots youth organisation that runs cycling tours which help participants gain experience in becoming environmental role models. The tours explore sustainability, media communication, leadership and communal living as part of a roving cycling community.