

New cycle of life for city's bikes

The Age
3/6/2011
P18

Melbourne's discarded bicycles are being reborn and hitting the road in Africa, writes **Carolyn Webb**.

WHEN Matt McCullough walked the streets of Opuwo in northern Namibia, little pieces of Melbourne kept zipping past.

Eighteen months before, in Yarraville, McCullough had helped pack 400 donated bicycles into a shipping container for the charity Bicycles for Humanity.

Seeing them being ridden by locals who previously had no means of transport, was "priceless", he says.

Some bikes were given free to Opuwo healthcare workers and the shipping container was converted into both a bicycle shop — to sell the rest of the bikes cheaply — and

a repair centre to employ and train locals.

"Before the bike shop being there, the closest place you could get a bike or get one serviced was about 300 kilometres away," McCullough says.

In the past two years, McCullough and three other Bicycles For Humanity volunteers have sent 1200 donated bicycles to Namibia and neighbouring Zambia.

They recently finished packing 400 more bikes into a shipping container, which sails for Africa this month.

Bicycles for Humanity has more than 20 global branches but it was a casual inquiry about an old friend three years ago that spurred

McCullough to start one up in Melbourne.

In the past six years, expat Melbourne Michael Linke has set up more than 25 mini-businesses in Africa as part of a charity called the Bicycle Empowerment Network Namibia.



