

Paul Fitzgerald

I'm a passionate cyclist, business leader and health advocate who makes change happen. I would welcome the opportunity to apply my skills in these three areas to help Bicycle NSW create a better environment for cyclists.

What Board skills and experience do I offer?

A full understanding of what it means to be a Director. I'm currently a Director of three companies. I'm a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and have completed the Company Directors' course. I understand a Director's obligations and responsibilities and stay informed about changes to corporate governance.

Strong entrepreneurial capabilities. As a business consultant, I help companies in Australia, New Zealand and Asia to bring new ideas to market by advising them on strategy, sales, marketing and management. I'm also personally involved in some technology startups. I know what it takes to turn a concept into a reality and how to convince other people to support something new.

Seasoned business leader. I spent more than 20 years as a senior executive for one of the world's largest brands, running country and functional business units and reporting to Boards. These years honed my commercial, strategic and leadership skills. I have an MBA from Sydney University.

Fifteen years' of senior stakeholder management as a health advocate and business leader. By collaborating with community influencers, businesses, Governments, public health professionals and academics, I've helped to define policy and change minds, and led huge organisational transformations. I'm an experienced speaker who's just as comfortable presenting to large conferences as leading small group discussions, and I'm a confident TV, radio and print interviewee.

What are my cycling credentials?

I've been a road cyclist for 12 years, clocking up around 200km a week as a solo rider and with cycling groups. In fact, I've just sold my car because I travel more kilometres a year as a rider than as a driver. I'm also a triathlete and wear my Ironman tattoo proudly.

I really enjoy event cycling. I've ridden thousands of kilometres to raise money for cancer research with the Tour De Cure (two full Signature Tours and one Country Tour); taken on the Lake Taupo Challenge six times; joined the Cycling World Cup and Tour Down Under community rides; and sweated along the Tour de France route.

Why am I so passionate about cycling?

I'm now 52, an age when lifestyle choices come home to roost. I'm proud to say I'm healthy and fit because of cycling. Not skinny (I'll never be that!), but able to lead a peloton. It wasn't always so.

I played representative rugby and other competitive sports in my teens and 20s, but by the time I turned forty, I was obese and unfit. My blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugars were rocketing and my job was high-stress. I felt dreadful and was a heart attack waiting to happen.

Then one day, I rediscovered my childhood passion for riding a bike and fell in love again with being fit. Cycling led me back to a healthy lifestyle when a gym or running couldn't. As my cycling and fitness improved, I ate more healthily, lost 25kg, and my health indicators returned to normal. Cycling saved my life, and I can't imagine living without it.

Now, I take every opportunity to persuade individuals who struggle with being healthier to see what they can achieve through cycling. I also address groups: I've helped to deliver health education programs at schools as a Tour de Cure ambassador, spoken about my experience at conferences and in the media, and introduced cycling programs at secondary schools.

What kind of person am I?

Passionate: My friends and colleagues will tell you that I give everything 110 per cent, whether it's raising funds for cancer research or advocating dietary balance at a public health event.

Values-driven: Over the years I've formed a set of core values that govern my personal and professional decisions. By being open, honest and ethical, I stay true to myself and can sleep well at night.

Facilitator: With group decision-making, I believe collaboration, cooperation and compromise are essential.

What will my objectives be as a Director?

I'm passionate about communicating the health benefits of cycling and a big supporter of making it easier, not harder, for people to cycle safely and responsibly. In particular, I care about four things:

- **Improving cycling infrastructure.** Cycling's great when you're starting from a low fitness base. Everyone can ride to their own limit and still push themselves and progress. But often the hardest thing about starting is mixing with other traffic. If cycling infrastructure is improved, more people will be willing to try it.
- **Attracting more kids to cycling.** Creating good habits early on is the basis of a healthy life. By making cycling fun and interesting for children then providing a pathway for continuing it into adulthood, we can help to reverse our frightening health statistics, ensure future generations are healthier and continue to build critical mass for the NSW cycling community.
- **Safety education and awareness.** Whether you're off road, on a cycleway, a deserted street or in a peloton- safety matters. That means a well maintained bike, the right safety gear, good handling skills and awareness of your environment. I've been fortunate enough to be around some very good riders who taught me a lot, and I pass on that knowledge to new riders. I'd like to see that sort of rider education formalised and broadened.
- **Advocating for increased rule compliance among road cyclists.** Obeying road rules is the only way we cyclists can expect respect from other road users. This is one debate where I'm happy to take the higher ground as I think it's fundamental to changing community attitudes towards cyclists as a group.