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## Media Release

### **AIA Australia announces new partnership with World Bicycle Relief Australia**

**Melbourne, 3 June 2022.** Leading life, health and wellbeing insurer AIA Australia has announced a new partnership with World Bicycle Relief Australia, an international not-for-profit that changes the lives of people living in rural communities, by mobilising them with the provision of bicycles.

Through the partnership, members of AIA Australia's health and wellbeing platform AIA Vitality will be able to support rural, low-income communities around the world by donating to World Bicycle Relief, ensuring more students, healthcare workers and business owners are equipped with purpose-built Buffalo Bicycles.

While bicycles are often considered in terms of a healthier and more environmentally-friendly alternative to driving, they also represent the opportunity for a better life for many. In countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Columbia, bicycles can overcome the challenge of distance which prevents people from attending school, receiving healthcare, delivering goods to markets and accessing other critical services.

In the past 16 years of World Bicycle Relief's programming and Buffalo Bicycle distribution, more than 3.5 million<sup>1</sup> women, men, and children in rural communities have benefited from the power of bicycles.

Locally assembled and built for heavy loads on tough roads, the impact of a Buffalo Bicycle is profound. Female students who have received a Buffalo Bicycles are 19% less likely to drop out of school, while absenteeism reduces by 28% and commute times reduce by 33%<sup>2</sup>.

In Zambia, community health workers on two wheels were able to quadruple the frequency of their visits to patients, while in Kenya, health workers were able to see 88% more patients than had been possible on foot.<sup>3</sup>

As an extension of the new partnership, AIA Australia is a 2022 Pedal Partner of World Bicycle Relief's global fundraising event: Pedal to Empower. This annual, all-abilities ride mobilises cyclists around the world in celebration of World Bicycle Day, with individuals contributing to the global goal of riding one million kilometres.

Funds raised by participants will ensure more women and girls receive bicycles that will help them overcome the challenge of distance, limiting their ability to access quality education, well-paid employment, quality reproductive healthcare, and property rights.

Di Mason, Development Director of World Bicycle Relief said: "Currently, more than one billion people in rural regions lack access to reliable roads and affordable transportation. This makes it extremely difficult for low-income communities to break the cycle of poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> The median household size is 5+ in the rural areas where World Bicycle Relief operates. Research shows the cross-utility and multi-users of bicycles in a household. This is the basis of estimating a 5x multiplier impact for each bicycle distributed.

<sup>2</sup> <https://worldbicyclerelief.org/the-impact/education/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://worldbicyclerelief.org/the-impact/healthcare/>

“With the support of AIA Australia, not only can we deliver more bicycles, but we can continue to build a sustainable bicycle ecosystem in the countries where we work. This includes assembling bicycles locally, training mechanics, and ensuring access to parts and maintenance support.

“Thanks to the support of AIA Australia and its Vitality members, we can help more people conquer the challenge of distance and thrive.”

Chief Distribution and Propositions Officer at AIA Australia and Chair of World Bicycle Relief Australia, Ben Walsh said, “It’s been inspiring to be involved with World Bicycle Relief as a Board Member for three years and I’m excited that our partnership with World Bicycle Relief will allow our AIA Vitality members to support such an important cause.

“Earlier this year, AIA Australia joined AIA Group’s pledge to help one billion people lead healthier, longer, better lives. In communities where walking is the primary mode of transport, distance restricts people’s ability to receive an education, access healthcare and secure employment. By increasing access to bicycles, we can provide a safe and reliable source of transport that will help people in developing communities to thrive.

“When a group of like-minded people come together, they can create a significant and lasting positive impact. A series of small donations can add up and provide one person with a Buffalo Bicycle, which will then be a catalyst of change in their community.”

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### **About World Bicycle Relief**

World Bicycle Relief mobilises people through The Power of Bicycles. It combines impactful non-profit programs with social enterprise sales to meet the pressing need for reliable transportation in developing countries. Its philanthropic programs provide specially designed, locally assembled Buffalo Bicycles for students, health workers and entrepreneurs. Its social enterprise sales enable greater efficiencies of scale and distribution of bicycles per donor dollar and create a deeper impact in program regions. World Bicycle Relief is committed to helping people conquer the challenge of distance, achieve independence, and thrive.

For more information, visit [worldbicyclerelief.org](http://worldbicyclerelief.org)

### **Buffalo Bicycles**

Designed by World Bicycle Relief, the Buffalo Bicycle isn’t your typical bike. While most of the world’s bicycles are lightweight, complex and made for recreation, the Buffalo was developed to serve the needs of people who travel long distances over rugged terrain with heavy cargo. World Bicycle Relief’s collaboration with industry leaders reflects a commitment to creating a stronger, simpler, and sustainable bicycle that can withstand harsh rural conditions. Coupled with the rider, the Buffalo Bicycle is a fierce force for change.

### **About AIA Australia**

AIA Australia is a leading life insurance specialist with 50 years’ experience and a commitment to help Australians live healthier, longer, better lives. In 2014 the company launched AIA Vitality, a world leading, science-based health and wellbeing program, to the Australian market. In July 2017, AIA and its partners launched AIA’s health insurance business, now known as AIA Health Insurance.

In 2021, CommInsure Life was integrated into AIA Australia. The lives of more than 3.8 million Australians are protected and enhanced through AIA Australia’s unique value proposition of life, health and wellbeing. Our vision is to embrace shared value in championing Australia to be the healthiest and best protected nation in the world.

AIA Australia has been recognised with multiple awards, including the Women in Finance Employer of the Year Award (2018, 2019), Super Review's Best Insurer of the Year (2018, 2019), FSC Life Insurance Industry Awards Innovation in Group Life Insurance (2021), Shared Value Awards Corporate Organisation Leading Through Shared Value (2019), Shared Value Awards Organisation of the Year (2020) and Shared Value Project of the Year (2021).

Further information at [www.aia.com.au](http://www.aia.com.au).

### **AIA Vitality**

AIA Australia is passionate about helping people live healthier, longer, better lives, and central to this, is its digital health and wellbeing program, AIA Vitality. AIA Vitality is founded on the concept of behavioural economics. Members are empowered and rewarded for making small lifestyle changes with the aim of decreasing their risk of chronic disease and improving their physical and mental wellbeing. In 2021, AIA Vitality members completed nearly 300,000 health and wellbeing assessments, visited the gym nearly 500,000 times and received over \$3 million in Active Benefits Rewards for keeping active.

Further information at <https://www.aia.com.au/en/individual/aia-vitality.html>

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