



Hot wheels

Stay-at-home dad **Mike Butler** and his son are finally 'easy riders', and that's not the only news.

You know what I hate about kids? They're so tight. When my three-and-a-half year old got his hands on a fun-size packet of potato chips, I asked for one. He said no. So I put on my serious voice and demanded one. He fished around the packet to pull out the smallest skerrick possible for me. Little sod.

Now that's off my chest, the big talking point down at the park today has been children's bike seats. Not a fan of those plastic pods that bolt onto your bike rack at the back? Join the club. Ever since we were bought one by a well-meaning uncle a couple of years ago... I remember it well.

"This is great!" I told my wife. "Now we can all go for rides around the 'burb. Up to the park, down to the shops and over to mates' houses with the wind in our hair."

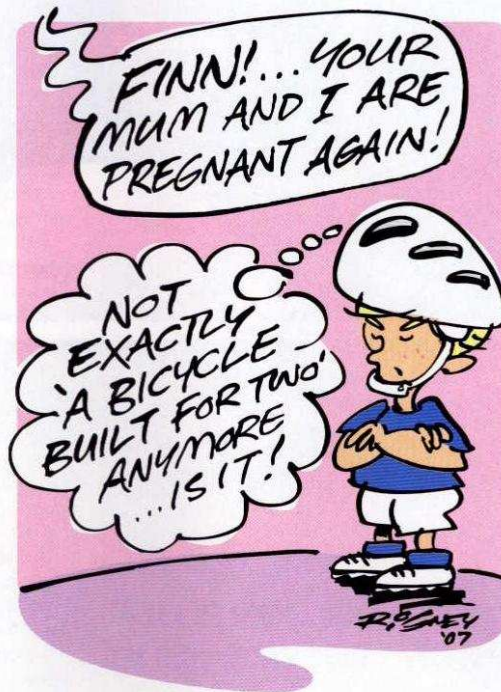
"Yeah, but is it safe?" she asked, quite sensibly.

"Look," I said to Missy Safety Officer. "I don't want to be brutal but what would you prefer – if I accidentally backed the car over him or the bike?"

This was not the right thing to say. One mother-flap later we were back on talking terms and ready for our first family cycling experience with an enthusiastic me, reluctant mum and unwitting child. I'll never forget the words. "We'll stick to the footpaths. Come on... it'll be fun."

It wasn't.

As much as I wanted it to work, fun it was not. Finn wailed without taking a breath for a solid 20 minutes, he tugged at his baby bike helmet and he didn't get any wind in his hair because



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he was in an air pocket created by my arse being in front of his face.

When we got to the park, I realised I had to practically do the splits to dismount and when I did, the bike with Finn on the back was as stable as a toddler with a 10-kilo head. Ever since then, I've secretly battled with the fact that kiddies' bike seats are kind of crap.

Until last week.

Another well-meaning person gave me another, quite different bike seat that I'd never seen before. This one isn't on the back but right in front of

you, in between your seat and the handle bars. So instead of your little one seeing only your bum, they get a true front-seat view, their weight is between both wheels instead of teetering out the back, and they can reach the handlebars to learn to steer. It's one of those things that's so obvious it makes you feel why-didn't-I-think-of-that silly.

"Let's go for a ride, Finny!" I said and, as usual, he gave me that 'whatever' look.

But the moment he got in it, he totally loved it. I know because he said something he never said on the old bike seat – "Wheeeee!"

I loved it, too. With the old bike seat I was always wondering if the little fella had fallen off the back, but with this one he's right between my arms. We talked about stuff we saw; we even exchanged an on-ride kiss.

Forget about world peace, global warming or the new

Australian Idol, the seat was the hot topic with the mums. It's a rare thing when they all agree, but all of them did. Even the paranoid ones that wrap their kids in cotton wool admitted it was an improvement on the old one and before I knew it, I had a phalanx of little ones tugging at their mum's clothing asking if they could have a joy ride. Amazingly, most mums said yes and every kid loved it. A week later, Finn's still dropping everything if I say, "Let's go for a bike ride". With all the baby gadgets out there it's not very often I think, 'What a good idea', but I have to admit this one is brilliant.

By the way, for those readers who care – I've just found out we're pregnant again. Yay! ☺