



# Riders earn bit of R'n'R

By Jono Pech

WHEN you are riding 17,800km around Australia for charity you can be forgiven for taking a day out to rest and relax on the river.

And what better place than Mildura for the 25 riders on the latest leg of the Great Australian Bike Ride to take a day off.

About 120 Rotarians have taken part in the marathon bike ride over nine stages, each raising money for mental health research and awareness.

Riders started in Melbourne on March 21 and has so far been around Tasmania, through Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane, Townsville, Darwin, Broome, Perth and Adelaide before arriving in Mildura on Wednesday.

On October 10 the ride will end back in Melbourne after six months, with four riders having completed every single stage.

Ray Carrington, Bendigo Sandhurst Rotary Club international director, said each rider had been in a different numbers of stages.

"I joined last Saturday so I'm a newbie, but I did the Brisbane to Towns-

ville stage," Mr Carrington said.

"That was a tough section.

"The shortest day was 100km.

"Yesterday was a tough day - 140km from Renmark so the riders are all pretty smashed at the end of the day.

"We've had a lovely two and a half hours on a local Rotarian's house-boat."

The ride has raised an estimated \$500,000 to date.

"Other than the government, Rotary is the single biggest contributor to research for mental health.

"It's a little known fact that one in five people suffer from mental health, whether it be depression, bipolar or something else."

Michael Jobe, from Irymple's Rotary Club, cycled the longest part of the nine stage ride, from Darwin to Perth.

He said he had ridden more than 4000km in 46 days.

"I really enjoy long rides," he said.

"Particularly when someone else carries all the gear during the day and organises dinner and drinks at night."

Jim Adam, Caloundra Rotary Club

president, said each rider made a payment toward their fundraiser and Rotary Clubs had been making donations too.

"Not all are Rotarians - some are just happy to support and raise money for the Australian Rotary Health Fund, which sponsors research into mental health," Mr Adam said. "It creates awareness and destigmatises mental health.

"We're having a fun ride but anyone with no training couldn't jump on a bike and do it, so it's hard work sometimes.

"The people who have been doing it for six months will be looking forward to sleeping."

Malcolm Nicholson, from the Ka-toomba Rotary Club in NSW, said some riders had raised up to \$40,000 individually.

"I've done about 5000km and have ridden through every state except Queensland," he said.

"It's been great and we've had wonderful people on the ride."



**RESTING UP:** Malcolm Nicholson and Jim Adam take a well earned break from the Great Australian Bike Ride.

Picture: Sarah Simmons