



Rider raises awareness



**Belinda
 YOUNG**

belinda.young@qtcn.com.au

ADMITTING to never even driving to Townsville, Mark Blomkamp will take off on what he describes as “one of the biggest challenges of my life” when he participates in the Great Australian Bike Ride.

The ride, organised through Australian Rotary Health Fund will see Mr Blomkamp pedal from Brisbane to Townsville, on a gruelling leg averaging between 80 and 160km a day.

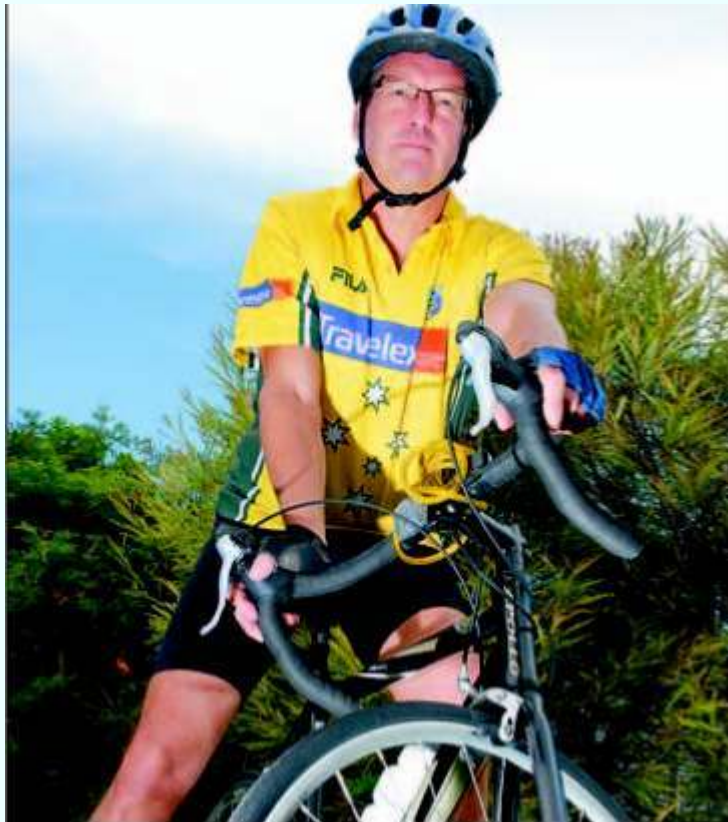
Aside from the personal achievement of completing the leg, dubbed ‘hard’ by event organisers, Mr Blomkamp has personal motivations to make the journey.

The inaugural Great Australian Bike Ride is being held this year to raise awareness and support for mental illness, an often debilitating condition that affects as many as one in five people.

Mr Blomkamp admits to “probably being one of the statistics” after being made redundant about two years ago.

“I had those doubts and uncertainty of where I was going,” he said.

“It’s a personal experience. My feeling was a loss of confidence, doubt, uncertainty, mixed emotions (and) loss of self worth.”



PERSONAL JOURNEY: Mark Blomkamp is taking part in Rotary's Great Australian Bike Ride to raise awareness of mental health.

“I’m willing to share my experience and help others benefit.”

Despite not being a professional bike rider, Mr Blomkamp is riding three days a week in the lead up to the bike challenge and admits he’ll need to ramp up his training over the coming weeks.

Mr Blomkamp said his suggested fundraising target is \$40,000 and he would be taking

donations up until his ride begins on May 9.

The Great Australian Bike Ride is a seven month ride around Australia concluding on October 10 to coincide with World Mental Health Day.

■ You can donate by heading to <http://greaustrian-bikeride.org.au> or phoning Mark on 0402 510 642.