



Great Australian Bike Ride organiser Jeff Kennedy, left, and the Great Australian Bike Ride participants take a break in Australind on their way to completing a 17,800km trip around Australia to raise money for mental illness research. PICTURE: MICHAEL WILSON

## On their bikes for mental illness awareness

A DEDICATED group of Australians rode through the South West this week on a mission to cycle around the country to raise money for mental health research.

The Great Australian Bike Ride, organised through Australian Rotary Health, aims to create awareness of mental illness and funding for continuing research.

The group began their odyssey in Mornington, Victoria in March and have since covered more than 12,000km cycling around Australia.

The cyclists made their way through New South Wales to the top end of Queensland, across to Darwin and down the WA coast to the South West region.

Rotary Club of Healsville, Victoria committee member Jeff Kennedy is one of the full-time riders taking part in

the Great Australian Bike Ride.

Mr Kennedy said the support from WA Rotary clubs had been outstanding.

“We have so far raised more than \$500,000 for Australian Rotary Health, which is part of our commitment to fundraising and the promotion of Australian mental health research,” Mr Kennedy said.

“Statistics show that one in four people will suffer some form of mental illness in their life, be it depression or drug or alcohol abuse. We hope funds raised for research will make a brighter difference to the lives of those with mental illness.

“Last year, Australian Rotary Health raised more than \$12.8 million in research grants for Australian medical researchers.”

Ages in the group vary between 52 and 71 with a number of people joining the ride at various stages — 74 riders joined the leg from New South Wales to Victoria.

The cyclists are supported by eight vehicles, a medical officer, a catering van and bike mechanic on the journey, which sees the group covering an average of 110km each day.

Mr Kennedy rates the trip along Broome’s Eighty Mile Beach, the sweeping wildflowers in Moora and Carnamah and the fishing in Darwin as some of the highlights of his journey to date.

The group still have more than 5500km to go before they are expected to arrive back in Melbourne on October 10.