



The final straight

By Kath Gannaway

HEALESVILLE Rotarians on the Great Australian Bike Ride arrived in Adelaide last week, having tackled the Nullarbor in the final stages of their 17,831-kilometre adventure.

The Nullarbor represented the longest straight stretch of road without a bend – about 150 kilometres.

The original Healesville team of Karen and David Brown, Geoff and Jennifer Kennedy and Colin Johansen left town in March and have enjoyed a close encounter with the thousands of kilometres from Melbourne to Townsville, through Kakadu to Darwin, Katherine, Broome and down the west coast to take in Perth, Augusta and Albany and on to Esperance and Kalgoorlie.

Rotarians Robert and Cheryl Chippindall joined the ride in Darwin and former Healesville Shire engineer Clive Walker and wife Rae joined up in Perth.

Speaking from Norseman at the start of the Nullarbor, Karen Brown said she had clocked up 7000km with some riders getting up to about the 14,000km mark.

Now on to her third bike seat, she said she still hadn't found one that eased the pain.

"You would reckon your bum would get used to it... but it hasn't. It hurts every day," she said. "Apart from that... "It's absolutely fantastic," she said.

"The people we have met and the support we have had has been spectacular and the landscape changes about every five kilometres.

"When you're in a car you don't see that and when you're rid-



Healesville Rotarians about to tackle the Nullarbor.

ing at 25km/h you don't look ahead to the horizon, it would be too soul destroying," she says with a laugh. "... so you just look around."

A highlight of the journey down the west coast was the wildflowers.

"It is just amazing, from tiny delicate little flowers to absolute carpets of colour," she said.

Healesville organiser Geoff Kennedy, speaking from the relative comfort of Adelaide on Friday, agreed the Nullarbor was a highlight.

"The straight stretch of 146km was ridden in one go and the whole trip across was quite amazing with the variation in vegetation and terrain," he said.

"One of the highlights was one of our riders picking up a stumpy tail lizard off the centre of the road with its head stuck in a can and carrying it for 17kms before he could find somewhere to cut it off," he said. "The can... not the head!"

The riders are raising money for Australian Rotary Health, which has a strong commitment to supporting mental health initiatives.

David Brown said people had been very generous with the tally edging towards half of the \$1million target.

The ride will finish in Melbourne on World Mental Health Day on 10 October.

To make a donation or sponsor a rider visit www.greataustralianbikeride.org.au