



On the road for mental health

CYCLISTS on a journey around Australia called into Moora on Monday, August 10 before making their way to Wongan Hills, all to promote awareness of mental illness.

The group of four cyclists and four support crew were part of the Great Australian Bike Ride and had been on the road for 204 days by the time they touched down in Moora.

They started their journey in Mornington (near Melbourne) in March and recently spent six weeks riding from Darwin to Perth, not missing a single day of riding since they began.

The group rode into Moora from Carnamah, fighting wind and rain most of the way, but were rewarded with a night of fun at the Moora Recreation Centre, where some interesting nocturnal habits were displayed.

They departed on Tuesday morning headed for Wongan Hills, with stops at Yerecoin and Calingiri Primary Schools, where the group was pleased to be warmly received at both schools by students and staff.

The group spoke to the students about mental health issues and was impressed with the huge range of questions raised by the students.

Both schools also made donations to

the cause.

Forty kilometers later and the group was received by the Wongan Hills.

Free accommodation at the 'The Lodge' (worth more than \$500) was donated by the caravan park and the Rotary Club gave the group their first homemade soup since leaving Melbourne plus spaghetti bolognese.

After a good night's sleep there was some fun and games in the morning with Wongan Hills Rotary Club president Bill Bynon sponsoring a 200m sprint event, with a \$150 prize for the winner.

In the spirit of true Aussie competition, selected riders were handicapped with sand bags and even given wrong directions to slow them down.

It was a fun morning for the riders before they took on grain trucks, more rain and high cross winds on their way to Northam.

"It was great to have the riders here in Wongan for the night," Mr Bynon said.

"They did a lot for the town and the Rotary Club and were just a really great bunch of people."

More than 100 cyclists have entered one or more stages of the ride, which will finish in Melbourne in October.

While most riders are cycling a stage or two, four are riding the whole way.

Queenslanders Tom Brown (70) and Roberta Gordon (62) and Victorians Gonny Rundell (58) and John Farrugia (61) have averaged 130kms a day.

Of the 18,000km trip, they had ridden more than 12,000km and have only two months left of cycling on their seven month challenge.

Australian Rotary Health organised the mammoth event to raise community awareness and support for its mental health research programs; an important aspect of which is redressing the stigma and myths associated with mental illness.

The World Health Organisation estimates that by 2020 depression will be one of the world's greatest health problems.

The cyclists were all aware of the importance of the cause they were riding for. Mrs Rundell said mental health problems affect one in five people.

"This is just such an awesome adventure and for a thoroughly worthwhile cause," she said.

"We need to let sufferers know they are not alone; one in five people suffer from mental illness and we want them to seek help."



On the road again: Ross Andrewartha is no stranger to the road, having ridden more than 12,000km on the Great Australian Bike Ride when he touched down in Moora.



Incoming: Cyclist Geoff DeChaneet was pleased to finally reach Moora on Monday night.



Cycling stories: Marissa Byrne-O'Neill from Calingiri Primary School was happy to have a chat with Great Australian Bike Riders Geoff Kennedy and Gony Rundell.



Fearless leader: Geoff Kennedy co-ordinated the mammoth voyage around Australia with his fellow Rotarian cyclists.



(right) **Time of their life:** Geoff DeChaneet, Robert Chippindall and Karen Brown were enjoying the ride around Australia and had a few tales to share with the Moora Rotary members who cooked them a barbecue.



Rubbing shoulders: David Brown, Martha Simpson, Neil Copleston and Geoff Kennedy shared a few cycling stories on the Great Australian Bike Ride's stop in Moora.