

Ride helps to lift spirits

Rotary wheels turn for research

By **RAE WILSON**

PEDALLING through the darkest days of a mental illness is a feat difficult to define.

So riding a bicycle thousands of kilometres to raise money and awareness for research into mental health seems somehow fitting.

Mooloolaba Rotary president Peter Griffin is among more than 100 riders taking part in Rotary's Great Australian Bike Ride.

He said he had been involved with Rotary for about 13 years and had always supported the charity, Australian Rotary Health.

"They tell us that one in five Australians will have some form of mental illness every year," he said.

"After you clear away things like cancer and heart attacks, it's the next most serious health pro-

blem in Australia.

"Certainly, in my extended family, we've had a couple of suicides and depression.

"I think most people would be able to relate to it, if not for themselves then within their family."

Mr Griffin said the group of riders had cruised along at about 25kmh for the 118km from Brisbane to Nambour, where most riders would stay for the night.

He said Sunshine Coast riders would no doubt all sleep in their own beds last night in preparation for the 203km cycle from Nambour to Maryborough today.

Mr Griffin said he was pleased with day one of the 1300km Brisbane-to-Townsville trek, which he hoped would raise funds for the medical research.

"I took up bike riding and racing about five or six

years ago, but soccer has been my sporting priority for the last couple of years," he said.

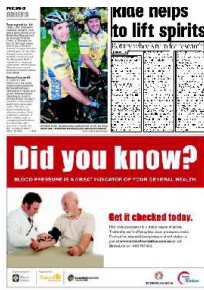
"Riding from Brisbane to Townsville will be quite a challenge and I am looking forward to it."

Mr Griffin is riding alongside a number of other Coast riders, including 61-year-old Noosa retired teacher Roberta Gordon.

Ms Gordon, who plans to complete the whole 17,813km ride around the country, was a depressed single mum, 35 years old and on medication when her gym group decided to do a mini-triathlon.

Ms Gordon regained her self-esteem, threw away her pills and became a Victorian triathlon champion within three years.

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



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Page 2 of 2



ON THEIR BIKES: Sunshine Coast cyclists Peter Griffin and Gerry Morris take a break from the Rotary Great Australian Bike Ride.

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