



Pedalling with a purpose

BENDIGO welcomed cyclists from across the country yesterday as the Great Australian Bike Ride rolled into town.

Bendigo's six Rotary Clubs joined forces to host the riders, who are raising money for mental health research.

Local rider Jacques Olivier completed the first two stages of the nine-stage ride in March and said the experience had been very challenging.

"I did about 800km start-

ing in Mornington," he said. "At the start it was very chaotic and we were put into four groups."

Mr Olivier said one of the big challenges was the hills and weather in Tasmania.

"The weather was not always pleasant, but we had obligations to reach certain towns," he said.

"I needed to push myself to new limits."

Mr Olivier said he had a close connection to mental health research after his

brother experienced problems with depression.

"I saw how difficult it can be to break out of and how close you can come to suicide," he said.

"What gets you out is the support of the people around you. For me it's very important."

Most of the 140 entrants are cycling one or two stages, but four, aged from 58 to 70, are riding the whole way.

The riders will finish in Melbourne on Saturday.



ROAD STARS: Cyclists from the Great Australian Bike Ride on Marong Road