



## **CTA 2021 AGM OYB Report – Trevor Knox**

### **2020 On Your Bike – Tiny Towns Tour**

The ever changing conditions and restrictions imposed by governments to combat the community spread of the Coronavirus pandemic resulted in a different strategy being adopted to conduct the 2020 OYB tour.

Conditionally launched to the membership at the beginning of April, the uncertainty surrounding whether the tour could even proceed meant initial take up was slow, despite being guaranteed of a full refund. A different approach implemented in prospective participants completing an expression of interest without having to commit to making payment, saw numbers increase dramatically.

A review of prevailing circumstances initially scheduled for the end of July was deferred until after the completion of the OYB Team's final reconnoitre of the route and meetings with all the regional and shire stakeholders. As a result, at the end of August it was announced the tour would proceed, albeit in a reduced capacity to comply with existing conditions and participants were asked to honour their commitment by paying the prescribed entry fees.

With overall numbers reduced to 110 participants, the tour ended up with a full complement of riders eager to explore the far reaches of the State's eastern wheatbelt region, seeing tiny towns whose names we may have heard of, but probably never visited. The 550km long, figure-of-eight route starting and finishing in Calingiri followed very quiet, undulating, sealed rural roads passing extensively through farmland. After some initial longer ride days, compounded somewhat by head winds, a welcome rest awaited participants midway at Mukinbudin where they still had the energy to 'kick-up their heels' to the music of the Haze Showband, followed the next day by a wonderful morning tea and bus tour to visit some exceptional rock formations north of the town. With shorter distances between towns and more favourable weather conditions, the second half of the tour was more easily managed by the riders.

As is usually the case with OYB tours, country hospitality didn't disappoint, with the variety and the abundance of fare in the provision of evening meals left everyone completely sated. Due to the lack of commercial enterprise in a lot of the towns, finding solutions for the purchasing of lunches was most concerning. However, with some innovation, planning, forward ordering and commitment by local providers, along with a late, unexpected offer from the small community of Cadoux ensured we all enjoyed our lunch every day.

Although on the periphery of the State's agricultural area, all of the tiny towns of Koorda, Beacon, Mukinbudin and Bencubbin had great recreation facilities/venues, courtesy of Royalties for Regions funding, which enabled these new places to be incorporated into the tour itinerary.



Prior to and following a post-tour evaluation, a number of innovations were introduced as either cost savings measures or assisting in streamlining future operations.

- A full colour Tour Brochure and (electronically field fillable) Entry Form was only made available on the CTA website thereby creating savings in both printing and postage costs.
- The collection and dissemination of participants photographs taken on tour was coordinated utilising free access to Google Photos platform, dispensing with the expense of purchasing and mailing out memory sticks.
- A two course dinner consisting of a main and dessert (from various choices) served at an earlier evening meal time of 6.00pm created a cost saving, facilitated a quicker serving of courses, reduced food waste and eased the work load of the caterers.
- The last minute withdrawal of the paid bike mechanic provided an opportunity to test the ability of the tour to provide a daily bicycle repair facility undertaken by tour volunteers. Participants were each refunded \$20 at the start of the event to cover this component of the tour entry fee. Utilising equipment, tools and spares supplied by club members, three volunteers, Noel Eddington, Keith McBurnie and Colin Prior undertook repairs for an hour in the late afternoon to get bikes with problems up and running for the next day's ride.
- Following the ability to successfully manage this bicycle repair facility utilising appropriately skilled volunteers from within the tour group, the OYB team has subsequently purchased a comprehensive tool kit, repair stands and consumables. A separate request will be issued soon calling on members to donate towards a collection of serviceable bicycle parts to be carried on future tours.
- The OYB team will investigate arrangements to have another replacement vehicle (not hired) to accompany the tour for purposes of carrying supplementary water, placement and collection of tour signage, pick up of grocery orders and collection of bike and rider in event of a breakdown unable to be serviced by the sag wagon and bike trailer.
- Two CTA members, Roy Stone and Christine Liddiard have been seconded onto the OYB team to fill a current vacancy and ensure sufficient trained personnel to allow for movement with the group.
- The loss of two former OYB team members licensed to drive the tour truck, coupled with the introduction of tighter controls by hire vehicle companies in registering eligible drivers has led the OYB team to organise for the upskilling of the licences of both Roy Stone and Terry Bailey. OYB will cover the training costs associated with the learner's permit, driving instruction and practical assessment tests to ensure both these team members qualify for an MR class truck licence.

Given what is still happening overseas and even within other states of Australia as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, we were very fortunate to be able to run the 2020 Tiny Towns Tour. From feedback received, its apparent most participants enjoyed the tour, both the riding and the socialising, so from our club's perspective, it can be deemed a successful event.

**Trevor Knox**  
**OYB Tour Leader, 2020 Tiny Towns Tour**