

Trim the Cat III - Perth to Esperance 1289kms in 7 days

Day 1 Perth to Bunbury 203km

Six riders set off from Kings Park at 0700 with cloudy skies and about 8 degrees temp. Down the hill, over the Narrows bridge to the cycle path along the Swan River. Stayed with the south side of the river to Fremantle where a circumnavigation of the carpark in front of the Maritime Museum was completed before following the coast roads down through Rockingham and Mandurah. This may sound like a lovely biking day out so far however By the time we were through Rockingham we had a howling 30-45kph wind directly off the ocean and moderate to heavy showers of rain started to come down on us. It was a tough push through to Bunbury with the wind trying to knock us over sideways. The others had tried hiding in a bus shelter, under a bush and decided just to keep riding as they were getting less wet riding than when stopped. Chris hit a change in road height on Forrest Highway and fell off taking Alison down with him but only minor grazes and bruises sustained, luckily. Half the group arrived around 2.5hrs before the others and so had showered and eaten when the other three came in bedraggled after squalls and hailstones in Australind. Chris's journey had bookend punctures one on the first day and one on the last day.

Day 2 Bunbury to Augusta 203km

Four riders set off from Bunbury in much improved weather and good spirits, as Wayne and Alison returned to Perth for work commitments. Enjoying a pleasant ride through the tranquil Tuart Forest before Busselton the day rolls by. Riding along the coast roads and paths of Busselton and then on the highway till crossing Toby Inlet Bridge to enter the back of Dunsborough, again along the coastal roads, breathing in the sea air. Very quiet, flat and pleasant riding. The climb to the Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse was a steady one rewarded with the fast downhill on the way back to the highway. Staying off the narrow winding Caves Road, we cut through small hilly roads to head south to Cowaramup where we joined the Bussell Hwy and down through Margaret River to Augusta. Three riders again arriving early enough to be showered and fed before the arrival of the last rider. We were sure we'd seen Chris eating bacon at breakfast so got him a wagyu burger for dinner but apparently we have creative memory banks, as Chris is a vegetarian, so the birds got the burger and Chris got the bun with the chips. Glorious weather after the stormy start the day before.

Day 3 Augusta to Pemberton 125km

Setting off from the bakery at Augusta was the usual peloton of four happily taking turns in front. After about 14kms two riders stopped coming to the front and looking back were nowhere to be seen. At the first turnoff to the Brockman Hwy a phone call established that Rod and Juliana were suffering with knee troubles and pulling out. Phil the super supporter was picking them up. Chris and Carol pushed on uphill and downhill and up again. A roadside coffee break before turning south on Stewart Road, towards the South Coast Hwy, was welcome. This was followed with pleasant though undulating riding through the tall trees forests to Pemberton. Very hilly country. Lovely day, karri forests National Parks and Phil had company in the support vehicle so he was happy. Chris enjoyed seeing the forests. Alison had driven down from Perth in the afternoon to re-join the ride and Rod and Juliana were able to drive her car back, so we took over a large table in the hotel dining room and had a good old catch up and farewell dinner, only moving off after hints from the staff that they wanted to pack up.

Day 4 Pemberton to Denmark 203km

Carol, Chris and Alison set off in 2.9 degrees C, rode swiftly downhill into a thick fog at the bottom of the town and a long climb out, onto the very chilly and hilly road to Northcliffe. A quick Audax toilet stop, check in with Phil and brevet signed in Northcliffe then heading out to the South Coast Hwy along the very straight but hilly Middleton Road and south through beautiful forested country. Unfortunately we got to witness where the recent bushfires have devastated this region, with kilometre after kilometre of burn bushland. The trees are sprouting new regrowth and lots of green

shrubs are shooting up out of the blackened ground. But with the denuding of the forest all the wonderful rock formations off in the forest were clearly evident, which lead Carol and Alison into a time passing game of spot the rocks. Must say it is still very hilly. A Phil super supporter stop halfway between Northcliffe and Walpole gave us the energy to make it up and over the hills. We came across roadworks and the sign said 40kph so we did 39kph through it and for some reason, heard the road works guys cursing, surprise maybe. Alison and Carol had a lovely lunch stop at Walpole with Phil in a sunny outdoor café. Just out of town was the scenic Knoll Loop with amazing glimpses of the Nornalup Inlet through giant Karri trees, with one sharp little uphill pinch to catch us out of gear before heading back on the highway to Denmark. Good run of 30kph with tailwinds for a while, but the hills just kept on coming. Another one of those nights when two were hosed and fed and ready for bed before the third one came in. Chris enjoyed a bottle of red and a vegetarian pizza at the YHA and the company of the new manager Mark in front of the roaring log fire. This was a most civilised way to end a long day.

Day 5 Denmark to Jerramungup 238k

Chris finished his pizza for breakfast and had a struggle with the YHA track pump before the day began. A chilly foggy 6am start to our longest day. A beautiful sunrise, black cattle grazed in their paddock in the morning mist, a very surreal moment in time, as we headed to Albany on the Lower Denmark Road. We all seemed to struggle to get a rhythm along this road but only to realise that it appeared flat but actually had a 2% gradient, followed by a steep descent into very dense fog. Carol and Alison pedalled like hell to get through the fog before the local commuters scuttled them. In Albany we posed for photos near the sailing ship Amity in keeping with Trim's abode then headed up the main street, and it was up, to Cusi's Café for delicious muffins and great coffee. Chris was just arriving as we left so we managed a group photo in the sunshine.

Getting out of Albany was a challenge with all riders heading to banks etc and getting separated, then not knowing where each other were on the route. A few text messages, negotiating Bluff Street (yes bluff as in hill) then Nelson – more hill, a downhill and Carol and Alison regrouped with Chris behind still searching for a bank. Several more unprecedented stops to strip down some layers, check the route and then address Carol's sock issue which was solved with wearing her soft arm warmers on her feet instead of her restrictive chaffing socks. Finally out of town and onto the open road. The road is supposed to flatten out from here on, so we thought, not according to the chatty man at the Manypeaks roadhouse, who burst our bubble with this news and sure enough he was right, hills, hills and more hills but the positive was the gentle tailwind.

It was after leaving Albany that Chris learned WA country roadhouses are not like Vic roadhouses and that you might be lucky to get an overcooked dried out pie or sausage roll or nothing. But Chris can go for miles on a handful of nuts it would appear and so Onwards ever onwards. Lovely mix of farm country near Albany changing to bush the further we were away. We came upon a pannier-less cyclist heading in the opposite direction who turned out to be cycling from Kalgoorlie around in a loop through Esperance and similar to our track to Perth and then back to Kalgoorlie over 17 days. Super supporter Phil made us a coffee at Wellstead 'Roadhouse' and then we cycled on. More uphill but not enough downhill. Alison counted 45 oncoming road-trains and 15 from behind – you have to do something to pass the time. Beautiful sunset and then Jerramungup lights visible for miles but we felt we'd never get there. Phil took a drive out to check on us and guided us to the Caravan Park chalets on arrival. It's a small town but they did have a pub with a nice roaring fire and hot meals. Once again, Chris arrived after we were fed and watered and so Alison cooked him up a hot meal of eggs and baked beans, in the chalet.

Day 6 Jerramungup to Ravensthorpe 114km

Thank goodness for a short day and a lazy 8am start. A cold grey day, that turned to sunshine to drizzling rain, for the last 50km. Still hilly, especially the last 15km with one very long 4km climb and still plenty of road trains. Rain plus meeting fast road train equals one very wet bedraggled rider.

Riding across the top of Fitzgerald River NP with lovely bush and loads of bush flowers was pleasant. This time due to family affairs of the Caravan Park owners it was all four (three riders and Phil super supporter) in one chalet. Time to do the washing and meet some of the interesting characters who reside at caravan parks, noting that we got one ladies' complete dental history and a rundown of the bargains to be had at the local Op shop. We ate dinner in the same pub as tomorrow's roadworks workers, very loud (Ocker culture night?). On returning from the pub we all lent a hand to fixing Alison's flat tyre. What better place to get a flat than in your warm chalet. We're not sure who was farting but we know who was snoring back in the chalet that night and it wasn't a rider.....

Day 7 Ravensthorpe to Esperance 203kms

Beautiful cycling day through low scrub and farmlands. Alison fell off about 2.7kms after starting whilst trying to get off the road for a road train. She lost balance in the pea gravel, a crazy slow motion fall. More bruises. Not long after that, we saw two cyclists in fluoro ahead and found they were training for a triathlon on the Alp de Huez. We had another team effort at fixing Alison's tyre once more and then Alison and Carol slowly left Chris behind again. There were longer rolls to the hills today but they still took their toll. We had about 70kms of quieter back roads heading towards Hopetoun then the long straight Jerdacuttup Road with rolling hills. Very surprising to see a little school out in the middle of nowhere which we thought might provide a fortuitous toilet stop but unfortunately it was Saturday and all locked up. More roadworks (and our mates from last night) doing the traffic management and were very obliging in allowing us to keep rolling through and giving us an occasional break from even more road trains. After 3 days on this highway, the road train drivers and grey nomads were becoming very friendly and obliging toward us as we were getting wide berths, friendly waves and even some happy beeps/honks. Finally, we had about 30kms of reasonably flat road only to be slapped by a strong headwind/cross headwind.

Wonderfully there was a nice long downhill into Esperance. A local Esperance friend came out and guided us into town in his car instead of on his bike. Half the population of NZ seems to live in Esperance now and they gave us a very warm welcome. It is a beautiful spot. Chris came in 20 mins before cut off while we other two and Phil super supporter enjoyed a shower and then a tasty pub meal with a celebratory drink.

We chose to travel back to Perth by Phil super supporter express service with the three bikes on top of the trailer which was almost as much fun as riding it ☺

Juliana, Carol, Alison, Wayne, Rod, Chris

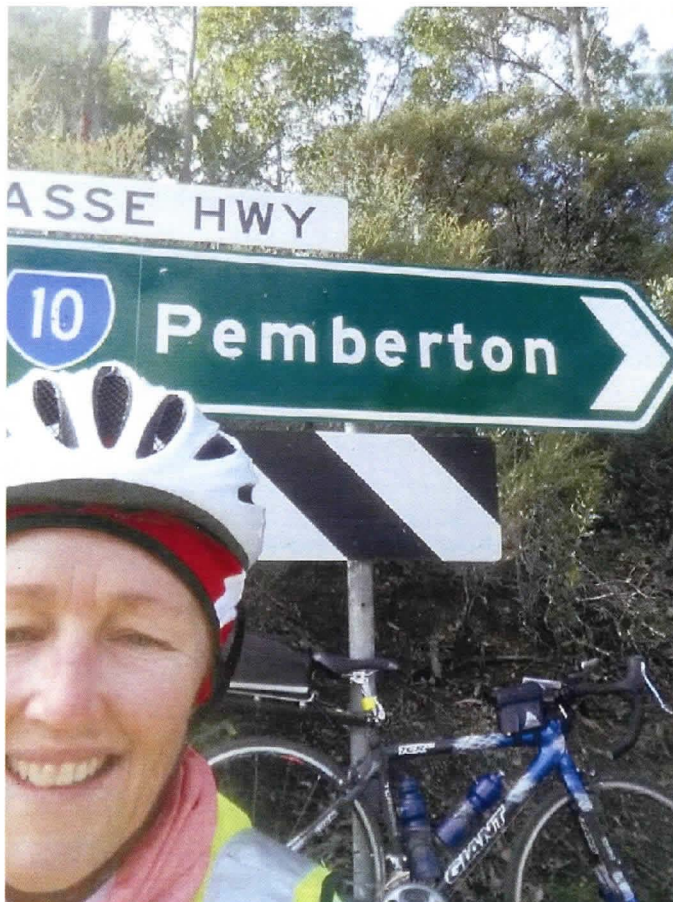


Augusta sunrise

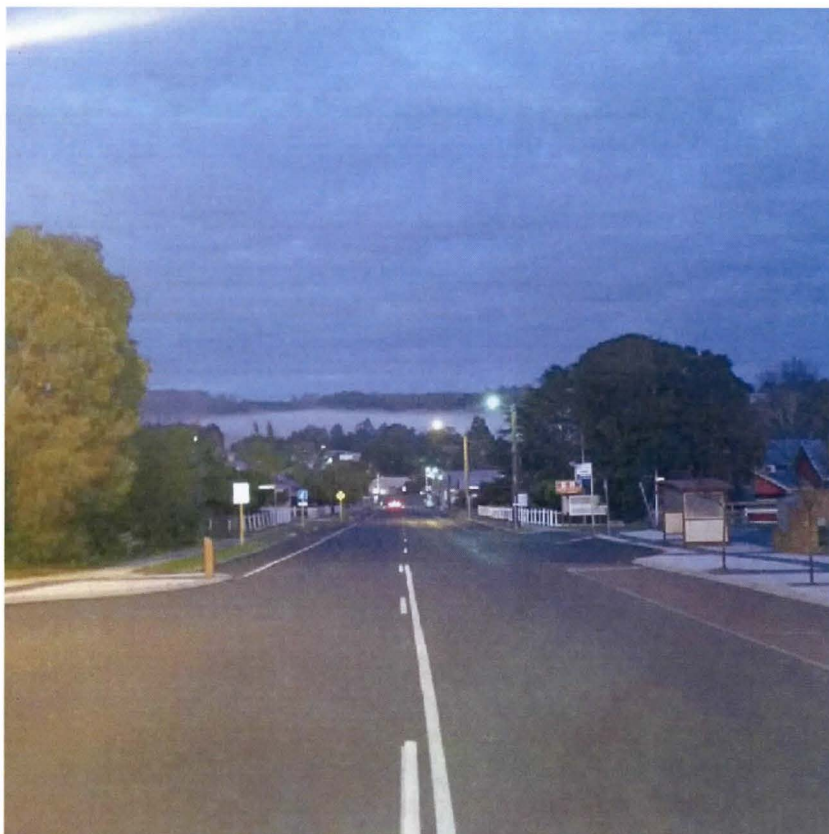




Rod, Juliana and Chris enjoy Augusta Bakery breakfast



Carol on the way to Pemberton



Fog in the bottom of Pemberton. Chilly start



Phil Super Supporter making coffee on the Brockman Hwy Augusta to Pemberton

Lower Denmark Road Sunrise



Views Albany Wind Farm in distance

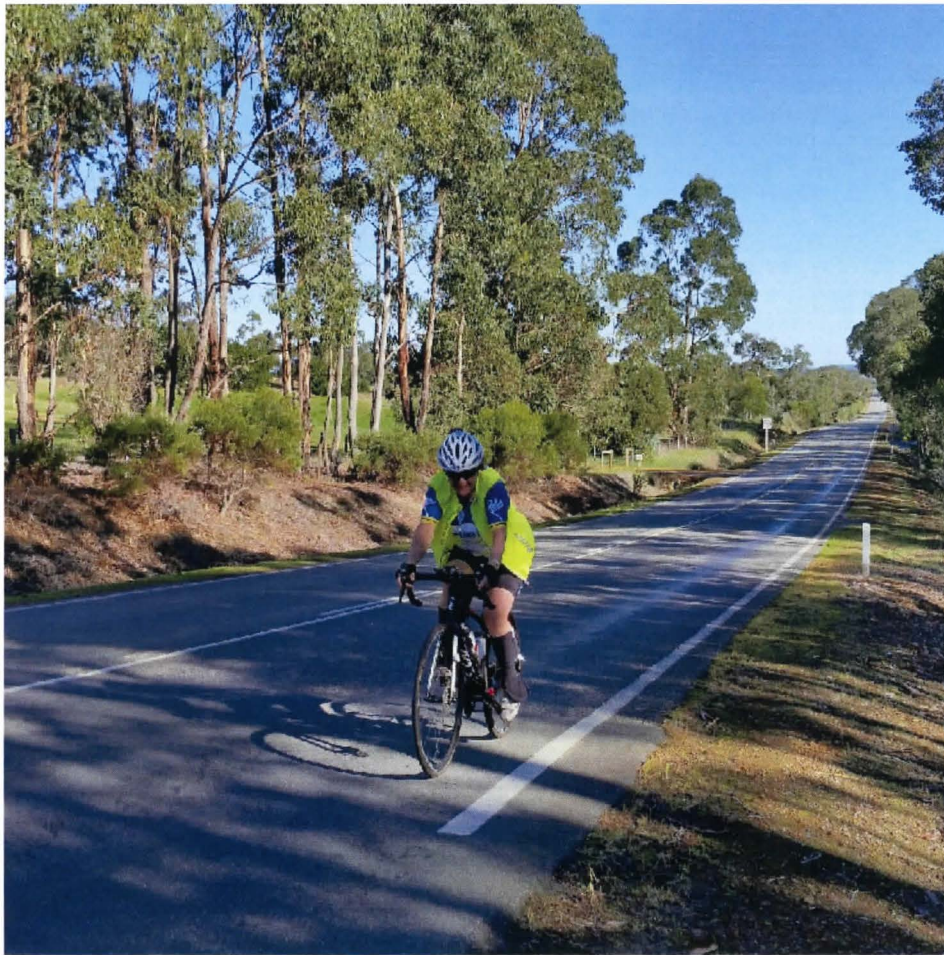




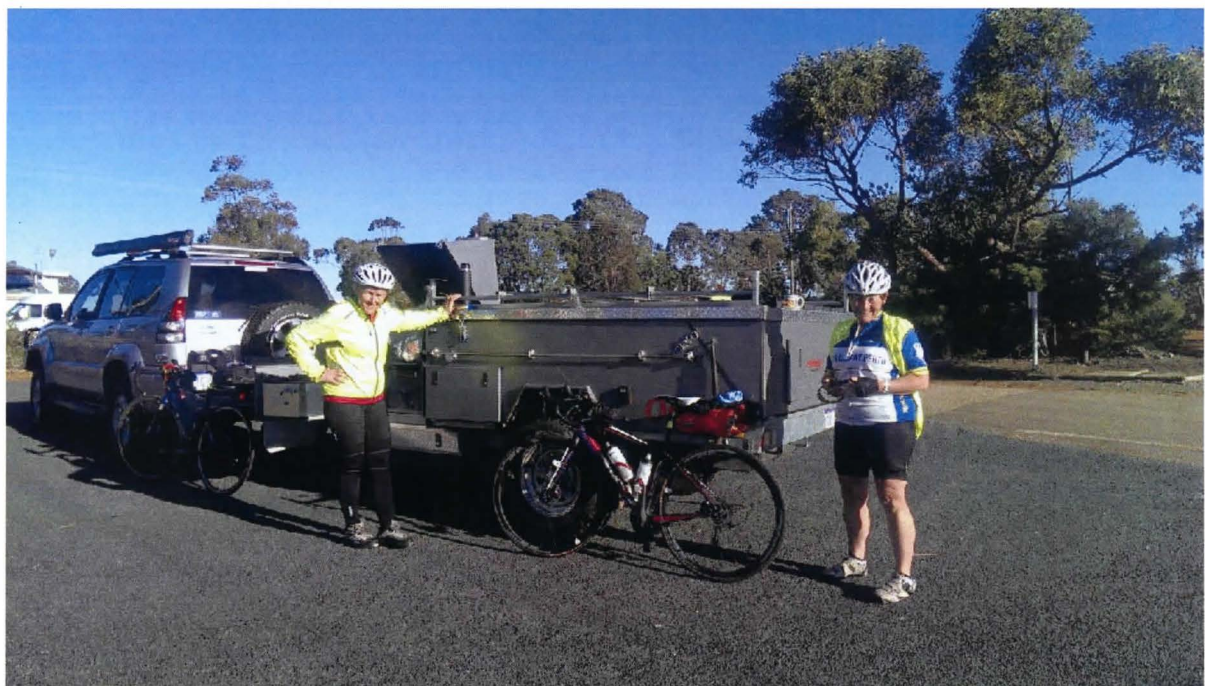
Alison at the Amity in Albany, Princess Harbour in the background

Carol, Alison and Chris at Cusi's Café in Albany





Alison on the road from Albany to Jerramungup



Super supporter vehicles and Carol and Alison at Wellstead Roadhouse

Carol, Alison, Chris depart Jerramungup Caravan Park for Ravensthorpe



Phil super supporter food stop 60kms out of Esperance



Alison and Carol, happy to finish at Esperance

