

Dear Club Members,

The Macedon Ranges Cycling Club has enjoyed a significant growth in membership over the last 6 months. The committee thought it timely to provide a brief summary of activities over the last year or so, and to invite members to tell us a bit about what they would like from the club.

I have been an active member for perhaps 18 months, and have only a sketchy idea of the club's history. However, at the time that I joined, its focus had largely been to conduct racing events. Interest in racing declined, and members were drifting away from the club. There came a point where a decision was taken to introduce social rides, which have become increasingly popular. A revitalised committee made up of old and new members, began to look at expanding club involvement in a range of cycling related activities.

Greg Bland and others put in a lot of effort to gain sponsors to provide materials to fix up the velodrome and club house (A very significant club asset) and also put in heaps of hours getting it ready to host track events. Late last year, the club commenced to run children's clinics, largely thanks to the efforts of Chris Karopoulos, Paddy McIntyre and others who have devoted many hours to making the clinics a success.

Club member Margaret Douglas took on the lead role in forming a Bike Safe Macedon Ranges group, and with enormous energy and passion, Margaret and her committee campaigned for and received support from various sources, and some funding. Many of you will have noticed the new permanent cyclist awareness signs that have gone up around the Shire, in addition to billboards, posters and articles in local papers. The efforts of this group have made the Shire a safer place to ride, and we hope that this is just a beginning.

Our secretary Chris Karopoulos has participated in the Shire's Walking and Cycling Strategy process, sitting on the community reference group. The club has expectations that the Strategy will lead to infrastructure developments supporting cycling in the region, as well as promotional and educational activities. The club will be keeping a keen eye on the Strategy processes, with a view to enhancing cycling in the region, and doing our best to ensure that recommendations are implemented in a timely manner.

The Shire has also committed to developing a range of cycling maps that we expect to be available online and in hard copy from information centres. This may include a map booklet, perhaps similar to that produced by Shepparton Shire. The Macedon Ranges Shire has excellent natural assets for cycling, and cycle tourism can help raise the profile of cycling in the region, and indirectly contribute to improved cycling infrastructure, as it has done in regions such as the Murray To Mountains area. I, along with other club members, made a submission to council officers to encourage them to produce a map booklet, and we have submitted a range of routes drawn up by club members.

The committee has been aware for some time that the club website does not accurately reflect current club activities or profile, nor is it dynamic and informative or generally useful enough. Consequently, a new 'web master' committee position was created, (filled by Linda Jones) and an application was made for a grant to redesign the website. The club was successful in obtaining \$5000. Quotes were obtained, and a sub-committee is in the final stages of arranging for the change process to proceed. We expect a completely revamped website within the next few weeks. Members will be able to renew online, more easily see upcoming activities and reports of past activities, and members will have the opportunity to comment via Facebook.

Given significant growth in the number of new club members over the last few months, the committee thinks it important to encourage members to tell us something about themselves, and what they want out of the club. I made an attempt to send you all a short Survey Monkey survey recently, but I couldn't handle the technology. We are hoping to send this out again in the near future. Whatever happens with regards to the survey, we invite members to email or phone at any time to provide the committee with feedback, to express any concerns, or tell us of any areas where you think the club can improve.

Going forward, we are seeking to expand the range of rides that the club offers. For example, it may be that some of our stronger club riders would like to have a third distance added to our Sunday rides that is longer and faster. If the demand is there, we will do our best to provide the opportunity. A second example is to continue to organise the occasional rail trail ride. (Last year we had a 2-4 day trip to the Beechworth area attended by 18 riders, and also a day ride on the Great Victorian Rail Trail. A day ride on the Bellarine Rail Trail is provisionally planned for the near future). The club also had a team entry in the Ballarat Cycle Classic a couple of weeks ago, with 16 riders out for the day over varying distances. Some interest has been expressed in entering a team in other mass participation rides.

A small volunteer committee can sometimes get drawn into a vortex of ever increasing demands. There is only so much energy to go around. Nevertheless, an additional task that we want to take on is to provide periodic (hopefully regular) advice via email of key decisions that the committee has made. One significant issue discussed in our last committee meeting, is the issue of possible changes to club kit. Some members are likely to consider that it should remain as is, whilst others have raised issues related to design, cost, and availability. I will send out a separate email in the near future asking specific questions. We are encouraging members to provide us with their input to help us make a decision about the kit, that best reflects member's needs.

See you on the road sometime, and once again, please feel encouraged to tell us your thoughts at any time.

Cheers,

Lawrie Hall,  
V/Pres.