



Rotary's epic mower ride around Australia.

An initiative of the Rotary Club of Armadale
PO Box 61 Armadale WA 6992

The Story of *Ride 2015*

Ride 2015 was Stage 4: Junee to Darwin

The team set out from *Armadale Mower World* at 9.00 am on Thursday 4th of May trucking all our gear to our starting line in Junee NSW.

It rained again as we set off as it did in 2013 though not as much. The team spent four days travelling to Junee camping out just to get used to sleeping in swags again.

Arriving in Junee late afternoon on the 6th to a sudden realisation that the cold was certainly with us, minus 5 overnight.

DAY 1: After a great day on the Sunday checking out the Steam trains and the Chocolate factory, early Monday morning we set off on the longest leg so far and did I mention it was -5 that morning. The team were nice and snug in the in the cabs with the windows up and the heaters on. Before we had left the town limits a truckie stopped and gave us a \$35.00 donation; a nice way to start your day. First stop over Cowra after 200km day on the road. The Rotary club of Cowra and the local Caravan Park put us up for a nice warm night.

DAY 2: A cold start again still -5 and a 185 km trip to Wellington at a temperature starting at -5 degrees and not getting above 22 degrees for much of the day. The team again had a great night in Wellington hosted with a local Rotary club member, with about 50 people coming for dinner and a chat. Still swagging it but in a nice warm shed is better than on the road.

DAY 3: Another cold start but only -3 things are looking up. Before we set off on our 150 km trek to Coolah we had the pleasure of checking out the original Wellington 1915 John Fowler 7hp Steam Road Locomotive refurbished and purchased by the Wellington Council. They still use it today. Due to the cold we had to stop a few times to warm the fingers on the exhaust through the day with the temp not getting over 15 degrees and a wild chill factor of about 1 Degree. We have even been as far and beyond the Black Stump!

Home hosting gave us a good chance to dry everything out and prepare for things to come. Also a nice cooked meal.

DAY 4: Another icy early start as we head off for Tamworth only 170 km down the road, Rex Dallas the country music legend was in town to welcome us. The local Rotary clubs organised home hosting and very nice warm beds.

DAY 5: We headed off on a 150 km shorter day to Wyallda after stopping so Rex Dallas could ride through town. Made the day for the QLD Model T Ford club as they passed me on the road, appears that I'm the first vehicle that they have ever passed on the road other than a vintage machine.

DAY 6: The final day today in NSW as we head off to Texas QLD. 165 km road works, long neck tortoise crossings and some locals with Clydesdale's made for a great day on the road. The bad

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Ride to the Other Side



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part was the seven km long incline that had a road kill every 500 metres and I could not hold my breath for anywhere near that time. Texas State School very kindly put us up for the night and put on a superb meal as well, the principal even got up at 6 am to cook us breakfast.

DAY 7: Our first day in QLD. 175 km to Pittsworth after a very nice cooked breakfast and a duel of Hustlers, we set off for. Temperatures are getting much better with mild mornings and warm days. The change in scenery from town to town and the condition of the roads are amazing. Loamy soils that give great growth also make for an unstable when wet base for the roads and they sure do suffer. Arriving in Pittsworth to a welcome sign in the main street was very special, before setting up camp in the local sport centre and a great night out with the Pittsworth Rotary Club.

Day 8: An early start with an interview with the local paper before heading off to Ipswich in light mist. Today we had the worst rain and low visibility of the trip so far. After careful consideration of all conditions we were forced to uplift the mower and trailer it to a safer area. Our permit condition require that we have a minimum of 400 metres visibly so when it was down to about 50m we had no choice. After about 50km we were able to unload and start rolling again, not before stopping off for a coffee and cake at a very nice café in the hills. Vintage cars and memorabilia included. The Shire of Rosewood presented me with a Certificate of Appreciation and the Ipswich Council, not to be out done, gave me a job with full work kit to boot.

Day 9: Today was a short ride to visit some dealers before heading off in rain to Brisbane and a visit to PLP or Powerup Lawn Care Products who are one of our amazing sponsors. A tour of the plant and distribution centre was a buzz for all in the team. The mower had a long awaited service and clean and we had a very nice lunch.

Day 10: Rest Day come PR day come washing and sorting out our gear day. Today we lost two of our great team who could not stay for the rest of the journey and they flew back home. Late afternoon we trailered everything out to Toowoomba for an overnight in the local Scouts Hall and dinner with the local Rotary clubs.

Day 11: A 4am wake up for me for two radio interviews meant it was not a lot of sleep. We were met that day by very bad low fog that meant we had to drive out of Toowoomba to find clean clear air to set down again, so about 20km out we were on the road again and off to Condamine 200km not before stopping for interviews and visits to dealers.

Day 12: 160 km drive to Roma weather is really getting nice now chilly starts but by 10am you're stripping layers off. We stopped at the new RFDS base & the biggest Bottle Tree. After arriving in Roma and visiting the local dealer we had a few tyres repaired for no charge and spent a very enjoyable night at the RSL with the community and Rotary club.

Day 13: Only a 200km drive today after a brief encounter with a breathalyser. Quite a funny experience as normally the Police take your photo and money but today the officer had his photo taken and he gave us money. The drive today was through some of the most amazing country seen so far; camping out in the bush again under the stars only makes it better.

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Day 14: Early start chilly morning but the sky last night was breathtaking. 200km to Emerald and home hosting again thanks to the Rotary Club, great dinner and company after a visit to the world's largest painting, the Giant Van Gogh.

Day 15: After a nice warm bed and cooked breakfast we set off for Frankfield only 225 km for today.

Day 16: 286 km this is the biggest day so far and a very early start with short breaks to get us 15km short of Charters Towers. The missed 15km from today will be driven tomorrow on our way to Townsville. The Rotary Club of Charters Towers put us up in the local school and we had a great chat over dinner.

Day 17: Up early and off to our uplift point from yesterday and we then headed off to Townsville and a 150km drive. The fact we had to drive back to our uplift point the day before meant we met Brian Freeman. Brian was walking from the tip of the Cape to Melbourne before he would row to Tasmania and then walk to the bottom of Tasmania. Truly an amazing man. Makes you humble to think what other people will do to make their difference.

Day 18: Rest Day - Visit and Media at RFDS base, dealer visits and time to service the trusty mower again and clean up before we start the stretch across the top to Darwin. We lost two more of our amazing team in Townsville but gained four more. Late afternoon drive back to Charters Towers for our early start the next day.

Day 19: Charters Towers to Hughenden 246 km. The terrain and scenery has changed again and it seems so much dryer than anywhere else. A lot of community support along the way, even had time for lunch with an old mate from home. Donations a-plenty!

Day 20: The new team have come at a great time with shorts the order of the day and no sign of rain. The lack of food and moisture would be the biggest emotional part of the trip so far. The amount of road kill was staggering with a dead roo about every 50 to 100 metres. Although this did make for plenty of food for other wildlife so that made for the most amount of eagles and hawks anywhere in the 9000 km travelled so far.

Day 21: Another great day on the road only 182 km to Julia Creek and much the same as the day before.

Day 22: Due to road conditions and permit restrictions we were only able to drive 180km to Mount Isa, with an overnight stay at the hockey club and dinner with Rotary and the community.

Day 23: Early start but late drive out of town meant we had time to do some shopping and get ourselves sorted for the next part of the trip. Short drive only 117 km and a nice bush sleep out under the stars again.

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Day 24: Bush camp to the NT Border and we really are on the home stretch. We crossed the border which meant that we have now driven the mighty Hustler Super Z in every state and Territory on Australia. The local Police at Avon Downs stopped for a chat and a few pics as well.

Day 25: 200km Avon Downs to Frewena Rest Stop

Day 26: 209km from Frewena Rest Stop to 5km past Banka Banka Station, Stuart Highway

Day 27: 256km from 5km past Banka Banka Station to Dunmarra

Day 28: 210km from Dunmarra to Mataranka hot springs, after making good time we had time for a splash in the hot springs.

Day 29: Short day after a quick dip in the hot springs, 106km Mataranka hot springs to Katherine.

Day 30: Rest Day 2016 planning.

Day 31: 203km Katherine to Adelaide River after 35 days on the road since leaving Perth we are down to the last few hundred kilometres.

Day 32: Adelaide River to Humpty Doo only 82km, great drive in, we even had time to stop and rescue three young ladies that had car trouble. Seems they had been waiting for about an hour before we stopped.

Day 33: Rest Day come planning the great arrival into The Darwin Lions Beer Can Regatta.

Day 34: Rest Day Interviews on the radio and papers not before helping the Lions Clubs of Darwin with their setup of the Regatta.

Day 35: 15km Humpty Doo to Mindil Beach, Darwin and the Lions Beer Can Regatta and the culmination of the longest leg so far, over 5175 km.

We had achieved our goal for this year! Thirty-two days on the mower and 5,175km across some of the most beautiful land. Not so much heat this year but cold and rain, on a *Hustler Super Z* mower. What an effort!

Again we need to applaud our hardworking mower. Over a gruelling journey of nearly 10,400km to this point, in extreme heat, cold and wet stormy weather, our *Hustler Super Z* has continued to perform flawlessly, after all this time still, apart from the regular servicing and a small problem in Melbourne. So when you consider the extreme in temperatures of high forties and low tens of degrees and so much rain for many of the days, to have almost no breakdowns or need any repairs whilst averaging 200 kilometres a day. That is really impressive.

This would not have been possible without the great support of so many. All our accommodation for the trip was again donated, which helped to keep our costs down. Of course, when we say 'accommodation', we swagged it, staying anywhere we could get power and a shower.

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We thank you all.

Here are the 2015 stats:

Total distance	5,175km
Total driving time	205 hours
Average speed	25km/h
Top Speed	36km/h
Funds raised to date	\$80,000 approx.
Funds raised since leaving Armadale	\$300,000 approx.

All funds raised are from donations and sponsorship!

June 2016 will see the team and our Hustler Super Z cover the final 4000km over 25 days from Katherine to Perth via Kununurra, Broome Port Headland, Karratha and Geraldton.

This time it will again be great in the North West but wet or cold whilst sitting in the seat for around 170 to 200 hours.

Regards

Craig Alford
District 9465
Past President
Rotary Club of Armadale
craig@ridetotheotherside.org.au
0417172651

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