

# Eastern Explorer Rally: 14-19 November 2025

## Day 1: BP Officer to Karoonda Park – by Rob van Lohuizen

One by one we arrived at Officer with great anticipation for the rally ahead. By the time Snads did his briefing we were only a couple of people short, however they were all accounted for. Briefing done helmets on and off we went, Snad's leading and Ian Bryant TEC.

Heading East up the M1 to Rosedale for our first stop under partly cloudy skies. At this time we had 22 riders, 2 pillion's and Gary with the backup trailer. The M1 wasn't the smooth and consistent run one may expect, road works a plenty, along with a number of speed cameras. It seemed like you just got up to speed and then another interruption.

We arrived at Rosedale, met up with the Geelong guys, who were waiting for us, we had something to eat and a chat and then headed for Bruthen. At this point, Rob & Erica left the ride for a bit, as they were heading for Maffra to take care of some business, they rejoined the group at Karoonda Park. Damien Lewer also joined the group at Karoonda Park as he had issues at Pakenham, before the start point, charging his electric Harley,

Continuing along the M1 for the lunch stop at Bruthen we turned off the Highway after Stradford onto the Bengworden Rd. Always good to get off the major Rds. While on the Bengworden Rd, a couple of jets flew across in front of us, flying quite low, then up they went vertically for a bit then went in opposite directions, leaving a big love heart in the sky. Not sure who it was from or who it was for. Anyway, we came back to the M1 and rode through Bairnsdale (this was quite slow) then onto the Great Alpine Road to Bruthen.

It would seem we were running on schedule, as we had a good lunch break. Plenty of time to eat and chat. Some of us spoke to another group of riders who were traveling in the area and also stopped in Bruthen for lunch. It was time to mount our steeds and get on the road again. The other group of riders were leaving at much the same time as us. Unbeknown to any of us, Paul Buekelman had ridden off with the other group.

Leaving Bruthen we took the Bruthen - Nowa Nowa Rd and then onto the Bruthen Buchan Rd, through Buchan and Gelantipy then arriving at Karoonda Park. It was now 4.30pm, as per the rally program, everyone went looking for their cabins to unpack and settle in, (no door keys in this complex). a very laid back and friendly place to stay. Everyone had a couple of hours to look around etc as we were to meet in the dining hall at 6.30 for dinner. Rob & Erica turned up only 15 minutes after the group. Well done Rob. Rob did have his grumpy pants on when he arrived and as a result, our cabin awarded him the dummy spit award for the night. He did settle down quickly after a couple of drinks.

As time went on we all came together in the dining hall for pre-dinner drinks. It was here where it became apparent that Paul wasn't with us and had not yet arrived. Jerry Coffey was his buddy and alerted us he was missing. There was much chatter as to where Paul was. He turned at 7.30, just before we were about to eat. This is when he told us that he had ridden off with the other group. Paul explained that as time went on, he realised something was wrong, as he was having trouble staying with the group due to the speed they were all doing. By the time Paul arrived at Karoonda Park, he had travelled an extra 100 Km or so for the day. We now had everyone accounted for and were a group of 26 riders, 2 pillion's and 1 backup driver.

TIME TO EAT.

We all sat down to a feast. We started with appetizers, followed by a 3-course meal which was fantastic. Very well catered for.

A big thank you to the owners, Paul & Judi Sykes and our host Lauren, along with all the friendly staff who looked after us all night.

I would like to mention what a great job Jerry Coffey did today.

As I understand it, this is the first rally that Jerry has ridden, it was a big day, lots of kilometres, lots of different things to contend with during the day and at the age of 79, what an effort. Well done, Jerry

Thank you to Gary McKechnie for driving his car and trailer around behind us all day making sure nobody is left behind.

In finishing, stay upright, enjoy the next 5 days.



**BP Officer Start Point**

## Day 2: Karoonda Park to Bombala – by Scott Oldfield

Karoonda Park, Gelantipy to Bombala via Bruthen , Orbost, Salmon Rocks (Cape Conran) Cann River, Bombala - 274km

Karoonda Park is a Hereford stud farm that has diversified into tourism and provides an adventure experience for school groups. Coincidentally, its accommodation is ideally suited for motorcycle groups, and we were billeted in the numerous huts around the communal activity and dining hall. We were having breakfast in the dining hall, getting ready for our day two riding, when there was the sound of heavy rain on the tin roof. Oh, that's not an encouraging start.

Luckily it was only a passing cloud. Just enough to soak those sheepskin covered seats. It doesn't pay to remove the rain covers too early in the day.

Snads was leading the ride today and we followed him along the same road we travelled on yesterday, although in the opposite direction. This offered great views across the hills and down the valleys. The reverse direction providing a very different perspective.

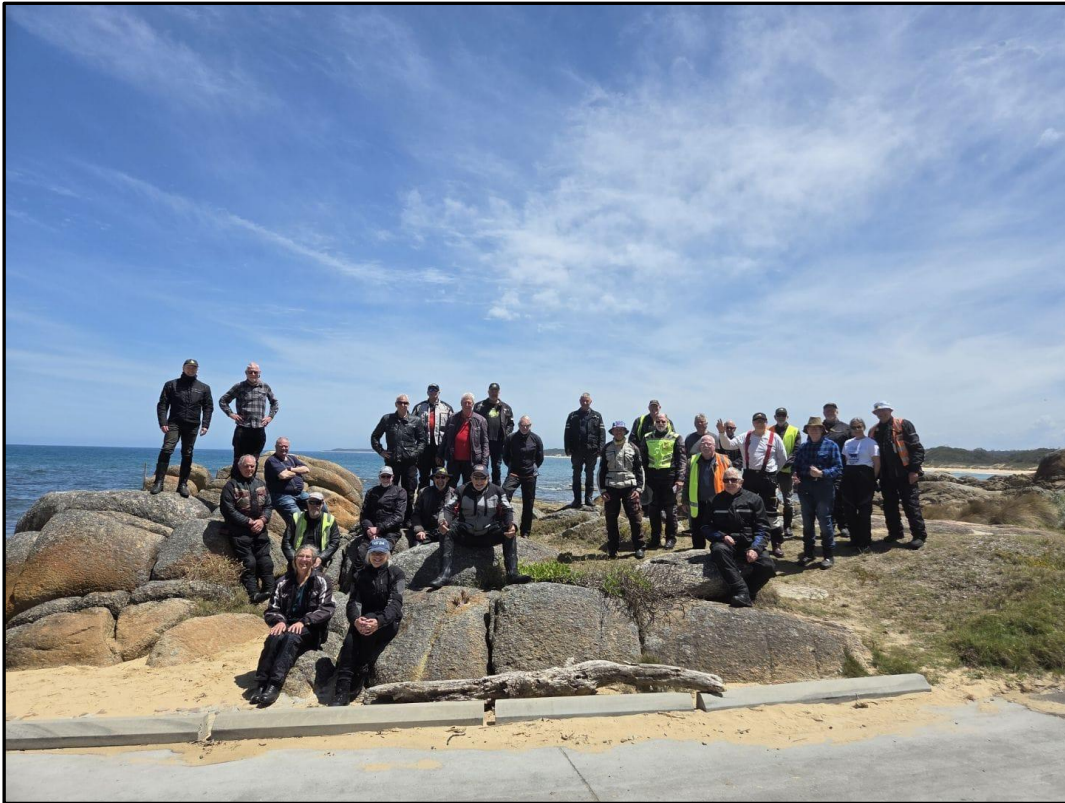
After 38km we regrouped at Buchan, then turned off onto the Buchan - Orbost Road which ran parallel to the Snowy River, not that we got any views of the river until we were much closer to Orbost. A few kilometres out of Orbost, I was corner marking when Paul Beukelman pulled over and walked to the corner, picked up a cap, and proceeded to dust it off. I walked over to him and said, Oh, that's a good find. You found a cap. And I said, Oh, hang on. That's a Classic Motorcycle cap. How would that happen? He said it was his cap. He lost it there yesterday. And I said, What on earth were you doing here yesterday? As it turns out, he had followed another group of motorcycles from Bruthen, when setting off after our lunch stop; and he ended up at this very corner just near Orbost, where he dropped his cap. And it so happened we just passed that corner today, so he retrieved his cap. Remarkable.

Another two kilometres and we were at Orbost for morning tea, refuelling and a rest in the sunshine.



**Morning tea at Orbost**

After morning tea we travelled south to Marlo across the river flats and alongside the lower reaches of the Snowy River. At Marlo the road swings east and heads towards Cape Conran, providing glimpses of the ocean. We stopped just short of Cape Conran at Salmon Rocks, which has a boat ramp and small jetty. Here we admired the views of the ocean for a while and took a group photo. We then continued north to return to the Princes Highway and then east to Cann River for lunch.



**Cape Conran**



**Damian charging at Cann River**

Arriving at Cann River we stopped at the local park. Here there were six recharge stations for electric vehicles. Three of which were Tesla types, which provide a faster charge rate. This made Damion Lewer's day; as he was travelling on his Harley Davidson electric motorcycle. Damian needed to be very strategic with his route planning, checking where the next recharge station was and its operating condition. These Cann River facilities were spoiling him. I suspect any downside Damien felt, due to the limited supply of recharge stations, was soon forgotten when he twists his wrist to silently zoom past in an effortless burst.

Leaving Cann River we headed to Bombala, our destination for the day. The road was less trafficked as we were off the main highway heading north with the Coopracambra National Park on our right.

Thirty kilometers short of Bombala, the skies ahead were dark and stormy. We race across the expanse; will we get to Bombala before the skies unload? The road directs us away from the blackness, yes we will make it. Another few kilometers and the road now swings around towards the darkened sky; maybe not. Nothing to do but hope it holds long enough for us to make our destination. Almost there, I approach the last corner into town and the sky starts to unload.

Damian pulls over to mark the corner, immediately reaching for his waterproofs. Well you would have made it Damian if it wasn't for the last corner. Most of us do make it to the cover of the Bombala Motel.

Later we dined at the Imperial Hotel Bombala for a feast of hearty country food and refreshments. My steak big enough to feed a family of four. Another day concludes.



**Dinner at the Imperial hotel Bombala**



**Paul & VFR**

### **Day 3: Bombala to Jindabyne – by John Addy**

It was a misty start which quickly cleared to bright sunshine and after a search for coffee and breakfast we assembled for the day's briefing. Jimmy was to lead the ride today and had adjusted the route to lengthen what otherwise would have been a shorter than average ride.

We set off on the B23 climbing up to Steeple Flat, turning on to the B72 to Rock Flat and Cooma. There was a Sunday Market in progress. The traffic was heavy and parking for 30 motorcycles in short supply. Jimmy selected the steepest hill he could find for us all to park up. Unfortunately, Paul Clayton missed his footing and dropped his bike, bruising himself, his ego and added a broken clutch lever to his already cherished collection. Time was taken to wander the market stalls, grab a coffee, a spot of lunch and listen to the ongoing busking competition.

There was an opportunity to visit the old prison museum which has an interesting collection of material from 1873 to the present day. An interesting fact is that the Cooma prison was the only "gay prison" in the world, housing homosexuals from 1957 to 1984 when homosexuality was illegal and punishable by up to 14 years' incarceration.

Lunch stop over and we saddled up for a very short ride (I'm sure we could have walked) to pay our respects at the Southern Cloud Memorial. The Southern Cloud was an Avro Ten three engine aircraft flying daily between Australian cities. In 1931 and enroute from Sydney to Melbourne the aircraft disappeared over the Snowy Mountains never to be found until a chance discovery of wreckage in 1958 by a worker on the Snowy Mountain Scheme. All eight lives on board were lost and was Australia's first major airline disaster.

Continuing our journey over Alpine country via Pine Valley and Wambrook on the Snowy Mountain Highway before turning onto Middlingbank Road. The wind was very strong and gusty and riding conditions were tricky, leaning into the wind. A right turn onto Rocky Plain Road/Eucumbene Road and Kosciuszko Road saw spectacular views of Lake Jindabyne and the Snowy River before finally arriving at the Kookaburra Ski Lodge.



**Bikes at Kookaburra Lodge**

#### Day 4: Jindabyne to Charlotte's Pass – by Damien Lewer

There had been rain overnight but the morning was overcast with nice warm sunny breaks. We headed off for Charlotte Pass soon after 9.30am led by Snads on our 43km trip with the promise of snow on the peaks. Our first stop was at the Information Centre to buy our Parks Pass before heading up the mountain but this was called off when the one or two people on the counter were overwhelmed by 15 or 20 of us all arriving at once. We decided to purchase our passes at the checkpoint on the way up, at the entry to the park where the one lady was also overwhelmed.

For the first 20km or so we had mainly dry roads in excellent condition but for the rest of the trip up the mountain the roads were wet and caution was needed. We were riding through the well-known ski areas, Smiggin Holes and Perisher Valley. There were a few people about, some walkers dressed all in black who were a bit hard to see and an intrepid group of about 6 runners as well. Then it started to snow very lightly with little snowflakes finding their way inside the helmet fluttering around like tiny insects. And of course it was getting colder, a lot colder. A little further on I thought my visor was fogging up but when I lifted it for a clearer view the fog was quite thick, it wasn't the visor at all.

I was relieved to reach Charlotte Pass where the snow was thick on the ground and quickly reached for another layer to keep out the cold as best I could. Luckily the snow was not thick on the roadway so we didn't have the additional challenge of staying upright in deep snow. We were in agreement to take photos and quickly get back down the mountain. We stopped at Sawpit Creek picnic area, where it was a good 15 degrees warmer to regroup and enjoy some snacks for those who brought morning tea with them. We discussed the irony of paying \$7 conc. or \$12 to freeze ourselves but I think we all agreed that we were glad we went. Those of you who are regular readers of AMCN, (Aust. Motorcycle News) will remember the annual or at least regular 'Dumb and Dumber' tour of the high country with photos just like ours and bikes falling over in the snow. Now I know where they went. From there we made our own way back the 15km or so to Kookaburra Lodge.





**Charlotte's Pass**



**Jerry & the Trident at Charlotte's Pass**

## Day 5: Jindabyne to Beechworth – by Peter Trathen

The morning ride briefing included our hosts at Kookaburra Lodge, Lee and Brenda. The club expressed appreciation for their hospitality during our stay, indicating a future visit is very likely. Lee was quite keen on that idea as he enjoyed having the car park full of interesting motorcycles. Jimmy outlined the itinerary for the day, and we set off along the Alpine Way. First stop was a quick loop through Thredbo. Quite amazing seeing the lodges built on a steep slope but also sobering to recall the tragic landslide that occurred in July 1997. Back out of the village, we continued up the mountain. A sign warning of “winding road next 55 km” gave a clue as to what was ahead. By the time we got to Dead Horse Gap, it was clouding over and getting cooler. Temperature dropped to about 8 degrees, but then slowly rose as we descended the mountain. And so it went, continuous curves, short straights, and very little traffic. The trick of course with these roads is to ride as smoothly as possible. When you do that, it doesn't matter how fast or slow you go, you'll just enjoy it.



**Bikes at Geehi**



**Morning tea at Geehi**



**Swamy Plains River - Geehi**

Eventually we arrived at our morning tea stop, Geehi. We had been forewarned that this was designated as a self-catering stop, so after bikes were parked, members settled down to unpack their treats. Very peaceful beside the Swamy Plains River. After while we headed off again, just a short distance down the road to Scammells Spur lookout. A little cloudy at the top of the mountains, but still a great view. And of course, being a bike club, a bike did find its way to the viewing platform.



**Scammells Ridge Lookout**



**Vince's Yamaha enjoying the view – Scammells Ridge**

Back on the road for the final curvy bits before reaching Khancoban. A few bikes were annoyed by a tailgating 4-wheeler, but all made it safely. Our lunch stop was Corryong, most people heading to bakeries, and a few riders topping up their bikes with petrol or electrons. Next leg was along the Murray Valley Highway, lots of gentle undulating curves through farmland. We had a short stop at Tallangatta, then the final run through Kiewa, Baranduda, then into our destination of Beechworth. A slight navigation glitch as we entered town was soon sorted, then we arrived at the Lake Sambell Caravan Park. Most people were staying at the park, with a few in town a short distance away.

Our dinner that night was at the Nicholas Hotel. After our meal, Jimmy got up on stage, not for a song and dance but to present the rally wards. He thanked Snads and Rob for their great work getting the rally together and sorting the inevitable issues that are a part of an event like this. He also thanked people who assisted with the running of the rally by taking on the roles of TEC or report writer. The following awards were presented.

- **Shit Happens** – Mark Mensch for his work fettling his BMW which had a few issues but finished the rally OK.
- **Bad Luck** – Paul Clayton when parking at Cooma, his bike got a little tired and decided to have a lie down.
- **Herding Cats** – Paul Beukelman as when the leader called 5-minute departure at Bruthen, he got ready then followed the wrong group of bikes.
- **Most Worn-out Bike/Rider** – Terry Hoare while the bikes were all OK, the fact he turned 79 on the rally indicated he was likely to be more worn-out than everyone else.
- **Most Unscheduled Stops** – Rob Mullins for participating in a field test of a VicRoads upgrade to his bike.
- **Never to be Invited to Another Rally** – not awarded as all participants displayed a satisfactory standard of behaviour.
- **DILL\* of the Rally** – Jerry Coffey for achieving legend status for his efforts keeping his Trident in excellent condition and then literally riding the bike across the top of Australia.

\* Deadset Indisputable Living legend



**Awards presentation**

After the awards, people started making their way back to their accommodation, tired but happy after a great day of motorcycling.

### **Day 6: Beechworth to Mansfield - by Ian 'Shorty' Bryant**

The Last Chapter.

We left Beechworth at 9am with Peter Mathews leading the ride and John Leahy as tail end rider. We travelled towards Mansfield via some interesting backroads through Milawa and Oxley, turning left onto the Wangaratta-Whitfield Road through to Moyhu and turned right at Boggy Creek Rd, on good backroads. We rode to Tatong and on to Swanpool turning left onto the Benalla-Mansfield Road. After lunch in the main street of Mansfield we said our goodbyes and went our separate ways for the journey home. Unfortunately, Rob and Erica did not make the start (bike no go). A slight corner marking hiccup but otherwise a hassle-free day.

Thanks to everyone who organized the rally and to all who attended.

It is fantastic to see the comradery of our members and guests.

Until our next rally, stay safe and good riding.

## Rally Participants

Mike Walker	Triumph T150V Trident	1971
Jerry Coffee	Triumph T150V Trident	1975
Mark Mensch	BMW R100	1983
Rob van Lohuizen	Suzuki GS850G	1983 (TEC)
Stan Rogers	BMW R80 RT	1985
Ian Snadden	Yamaha FJ1200	1990 (Ride Leader)
Peter Mathews	BMW K1100RS	1993
Rob Mullins & Erica	Honda VFR750	1995
Vince Rogers	Yamaha XJR1200	1995
Wally Walsh	Triumph Trophy 1200	1997
Daryle Kopke	BMW RT1100	1997
Jimmy Linton	Yamaha XJR 1300	1999 (Ride Leader)
Janet Walker	Honda VTR250	2004
Ron Study	Triumph America	2007 (TEC)
John Addy	Suzuki GSX650	2008
Ian Bryant	Kawasaki W800	2012 (TEC)
Peter Trathen	Suzuki V-Strom 650	2012
Paul Clayton	Honda VFR800	2014
Terry Hoare	Honda VFRX800	2017
Peter Hansen	Triumph Street Twin 900	2017
Damien Lewer	Harley Davidson Livewire	2021
Tony Cuffe	BMW F850	2021
Graham & Lynne Boulter	Triumph T900GT	2022
Scott Oldfield	Ducati V2S	2022
Paul Beukelman	Harley Davidson	2022
John Leahy	Ducati	(TEC)
Gary McKechnie	Holden Colorado	Back-up Trailer