



11 April 2006

## Politicians charity bike ride raises \$300,000 for diabetes

The 2006 Pollie Pedal charity bike ride has raised more than \$300,000 for diabetes research at the Westmead Millennium Institute at Westmead Hospital.

The Pollie Pedal ride covered 1,100km from Brisbane to Sydney. The riders travelled through Beaudesert, Kyogle, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Taree, Gloucester, Maitland, the Central Coast and finished today at Westmead Hospital.

More than 80 cyclists participated in the ninth annual Pollie Pedal to help raise money for diabetes research. The Federal Politicians that took part this year include the Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile; the Minister for Health, Tony Abbott; the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, Jim Lloyd; the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Pat Farmer; Federal Member for Lindsay, Jackie Kelly; Federal Member for Deakin, Phil Barresi; Federal Member for Cowper, Luke Hartsuyker; Federal Member for Parramatta, Julie Owens; the Federal Member for Oxley, Bernie Ripoll and Tasmanian Senator Guy Barnett.

More than 60 other cyclists, doctors and members of local communities joined in along the way, including the Australian of the Year, Professor Ian Frazer; the Federal President of AMA, Mukesh Haikerwal; the Chair of Cancer Australia, Bill Glasson, and Olympic cyclist Stephen Hodge. The Dutch Health Minister, Clemence Ross-van Dorp, also joined Pollie Pedal for a day as part of her trip to Australia.

Over the past 20 years, the incidence of Australians with diabetes has trebled. It is estimated that one million Australians have diabetes and many more are undiagnosed. The Westmead Millennium Institute is researching new methods of treating Type 1 diabetes (which affects

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150,000 people), as well as investigating ways of reducing and reversing the renal damage caused by diabetes. Funds raised by Pollie Pedal will help these researchers continue working to find a cure.

“Of the money raised, more than \$20,000 came from residents we met along the ride. The generosity of local communities to donate to such a worthwhile cause was overwhelming,” Tony Abbott said.

“The Pollie Pedal is also chance for politicians to get out of their suits and talk to people in their home towns about the issues affecting their lives. There is no greater leveler than doing this on a push bike.”

“While riding through the towns of Beaudesert, Kyogle, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Taree, Gloucester, Maitland, and Gosford, I was particularly pleased to be able to meet with local doctors, visit the hospitals and get first-hand knowledge of their particular health issues,” Mr Abbott said.

Over the past eight years, Pollie Pedal has raised more than \$650,000 for organisations such as Ronald McDonald House, the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Youth Insearch, the Paralympic Games and childhood leukaemia research.

The Pollie Pedal would not be possible without the support of our sponsors. This year’s major sponsor is the Australian Hotels Association (NSW) and the other main sponsors include Novartis, ABC Learning Centres, Novo Nordisk and Microsoft. There are also nine supporting sponsors. The money raised from Pollie Pedal goes directly to Westmead. Anyone wishing to donate to diabetes research at Westmead can call the Westmead Millennium Foundation on 1800 639 037.

**Media contact: Kate Miranda, Office of Tony Abbott, 0417 425 227**

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