

"Melanoma is the leading cancer in young people..."

Maura's cancer mission

Daughter's death spurs Mum
on 1500km ride, \$150K bid

TRISH GALLAGHER

MELANOMA campaigner Maura Luxford took a short rest break in Wangaratta last week on her 1500 kilometre bike ride from Kempsey, NSW, to Melbourne.

And she reckoned she has thighs like fence posts after discovering the road from Sydney to Yass was all uphill.

Maura set out on ride4acure to support research for new treatments and ultimately a cure into melanoma affecting adolescents and young adults (15-25 year olds).

The Hannah Rose Melanoma Research Fund is named after her daughter, who died aged 20 last December after being diagnosed with a malignant melanoma 12 months before.

She was able to catch up with her sister-in-law Sandi Anderson's

family in Wangaratta and stayed two nights.

Maura aims to raise \$150,000 on behalf of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne, the end destination of her ride.

"I'm taking 38 days to complete the journey, stopping at many towns en route to promote awareness regarding melanoma and skin cancer," she said.

"Melanoma is the leading cancer in young people, and cancer in general is the second biggest cause of death in young people in Australia next to car accidents."

While in Wangaratta it was National Skin Cancer Awareness Week, backing up Maura's message.

She spoke to about 400 high school students at Galen Catholic College and Wangaratta High

School, and the Wangaratta Rotary Club.

"At the schools I present 'Mela-What?' - it's about Hannah's journey with melanoma, current statistics, the impact of UV radiation, skin cell damage and sunsafe practices," she said.

"This is a potent message that helps young people make the connection between sunsafe practices and skin cancer prevention.

"I can literally see kids joining the dots and making sense of things when they see that this disease affects kids just like them."

FACTS ON MELANOMA:

- caused by exposure to UV radiation from sun and other sources;
- 2 in 3 Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70;
- Over 1700 Australians die from skin cancer each year, and 430,000 Australians are treated for skin cancer each year;
- melanoma makes up a quarter of all cancers in those aged 15-44 years.



BEWARE THE SUN: Maura Luxford in Wangaratta with one of her support crew, Sam Luxford.

PHOTO: Cheryl Browne