



The Bandanna Day Bike Ride Story *by event organiser Andy Willis*

When I first took over Traveland Bega & Narooma in October 1999, there was a box of Canteen Bandannas on the front counter for sale for \$2 each. CanTeen is a national peer support organisation for young people (12-24) living with cancer and Bandannas were sold by Traveland offices each year to raise money for this charity.

At the time these Bandanna's didn't mean much to me, so consequently we only sold a very moderate amount of these bandanna's at \$2 each and sent this very moderate amount along with the unsold bandanna's back to Canteen.

One of the speakers at the National Traveland Conference on the Gold Coast the next year (July 2000), was a young lady by the name of Penny Marsden. Penny told her story where, as an ambitious and energetic young girl in her early teens she was struck down with the news that she had cancer.

Penny told of the terrible treatment that she had to endure while all of her friends were enjoying their teenage years going out, playing sports and dreaming of their life ahead.

It was through this terrible time in her life that she came in contact with CanTeen, a peer support organisation for young people living with cancer. This organisation was instrumental in giving the support needed to get Penny through these tough times.

Penny Marsden's sad story at that Traveland Conference was a reminder of how lucky we are to have our health. The story of her traumatic and painful teenage years of cancer treatment and her fight to recover while all her friends were living a normal teenage life really got to me.

After listening to Penny's story I vowed to do more than just sit the Bandannas on the counter that year.

I tried to dream up an idea involving doing something a bit different to raise money for CanTeen on Bandanna Day, and I came up with the idea of riding my push bike the 80kms from my then Traveland Narooma office to our Traveland Bega office and raising money by way of sponsorship.

I had offers from other people interested in doing the ride with me, and the Bandanna Day Bike Ride was born.

The Bandanna Day Bike Ride then became an annual event and has continued to grow every year, the route of the ride changed a few years back with the ride now starting in Bega and travelling on a very scenic but hilly 70km circle route via the coastal township of Merimbula and back to Bega.

The Bandanna Day Bike Ride has raised close to \$120,000.00 and become more than just a fundraiser for a very worthy cause, it has become a Bega Valley community day out.