

What a busy year that was.

I thought there was a lot going on the year before but this year took it to another level.

The good news is that we are able to get involved in so many activities because the mountain bike community is responding to what we are doing and supporting us in many different ways.

This is evidenced by the growth in our participation numbers from local riders, be that riding in a club race, or volunteering at a working bee or either of our major events. We have also seen record numbers at the GTE and the six hour with riding coming from all over to ride the trails around Bendigo. (A bit more on those two big events later on)

First let me say that I am not standing for the role of President this year, It's been 2 and half years in the role for me and I only every saw myself as helping the club put itself on a course for bigger and better things.

We are 3 years into what i said was a 10 year project. But it's not my project, i want it to be a club vision to have a world class trail network on the doorstep of the Bendigo CBD.

So it was important to me to have succession planning in place and having Rim as Vice President has been of great assistance to me and I would like to publicly state my support for him to become the club's next President. I see the strength of the club comes from its members that allows us to put together a strong committee that makes the role of President a much easier task. I've been fortunate to have a strong committee behind me during my time and I would like to thank each of you for the support you have shown to me.

It's time to hand the baton to a new president to continue the progress.

The other thing I want to say upfront is that yes I am growing a Mo for Movember. So my apologies for making you endure this over the next few weeks. It will be my first ever Mo or Beard, a week's the longest I've gone before so fingers crossed I make it to the end. It could be looking scary by the time I roll up the start line at the Forrest Festival at the end of November. It's a good cause helping to raise funds for Men's Health and if you would like to donate go to the Movember website search for my name and away you go.

One of the things that gives me the most satisfaction is the number of new faces around the club - mums and dads and kids, novice riders, old riders getting back on the bike and more and more ladies taking to the tracks. A special mention to Jo Wall for her help with the ladies skills sessions which were very popular and to Russ, Kingsley and Tasman for running our junior skill sessions. These are so important for the progress of our club and have contributed to the strong growth in the number of club members.

We let ourselves down a little bit on the social ride side of things which is something we can look to improve next year but having said that the come and try day at Andy's prior to the six hour was one of our busiest days and more than made up for the lack of social rides during the year.

Other highlights for me were the acquisition of our come and try bikes via a grant from VicHealth. We decided that the best way of deciding where to get the bikes from was to go out to tender. We wanted to look at the big picture. The bigger and better range of bikes we could get would give as many people as possible a chance to ride a mountain bike. More riders on bikes leads to a bigger stronger club, more power when it comes to approaching government bodies. Good for everyone.

We also got funding for a Defib machine from St Johns Ambulance which is a great addition to the club facilities.

Our major events were huge this year.

The Epic in April really established itself as a big ticket item on the MTB scene in Australia. It was a top class field and big numbers ensured a great atmosphere in the race village. We had a huge crowd hang around for presentations, maybe it was something to do with the fact we were giving away a \$3,500 bike. It was so good a local won the bike. Thanks to Cycle Scape for their support and a big thanks to Joel Rockes for leading the charge on this event.

It was a calculated gamble to commit moving the six hour from its home of many years. A number of factors were taken into consideration before a final decision was made. In the end it came down to the fact that it was too good an opportunity to knock back and despite the risks associated with building a new track from scratch in a short space of time we made the move.

And what a move it was - 390 riders set a new bench mark for riders at an event. Our return to the VES after an absence of a few years saw us have the biggest round of the series, even topping the finale at Buxton. The setting at Big Hill is amazing, the location is ideal for riders coming from Melbourne, the course the guys built was first class and the event was a huge success – only soured by the theft of our trailer a few weeks later.

Thanks to the crew that got Andy's Trail Network off the ground led by Paul Lythgo from Bendigo Cycles who are also our major sponsor – thanks Paul and Jo and thanks to Andy for the use of his land.

The Victorian Schools champs got bigger and better this year. Numbers were up from 175 to 230 and the shift to Muldoon reserve as the event village made a huge difference. We have this event next year as well. The added bonus is that we now have approval for the use of Muldoon Reserve for our club races too.

Trail building slowed down due to some changes in regulations, we have almost got the green loop finished but PV need to re-engage with other agencies before giving us the go ahead. It's a little bit frustrating to be so close but we need to keep the bigger picture in mind. The timing was fortunate in another way in that it allowed us direct our efforts into the development of Andy's trail network.

We are working on formalising a management plan with the Andy's trail network group, Andy and our club to ensure that there is a positive relationship built to the benefit of everyone.

We started the year with our ideas for the construction of a shelter on the pony club site. That has evolved into a broader plan for the upgrade of the whole area, the pony club and Muldoon reserve. Discussions with council gave us hope about a successful grant application and we were pleased to be chosen as one of the projects the council endorsed and submitted to SRV for approval. We are looking at a \$230K project with the club contributing up to 10%.

Our funding apps for a major trail plan and audit hit a few snags along the way. We have never been officially knocked back but getting funds that don't relate to construction is difficult. We haven't given up on the master plan funding either and have worked out a few different ways to try and fund this project. Watch this space.

The Muldoon Reserve project is really a community project and that's what I see the club becoming, a valuable partner of the broader community, interacting with council, local residents, other sporting groups and organisations. For example the scouts who we recently met with. The Scouts are an example of what could be achieved. Their Cycling team is considering setting up a base at Spring Gully and we hope to have written approval of putting our big container on their land.

Before I finish I want to thank the committee. To Rim for all his support, Jo and Gaz great jobs again as Secretary and Treasurer. My thanks also to Russell, Kingsley, Paul, Barry, Gareth, Joel, Stuart, Murray, Peta and Shaun and Phil.

A few are standing down this year –

Murray a life member, taking a back seat but still see him on the trails several times a week. A big contribution over many years.

Shaun – A past president, Peta, Kingsley and Phil Turner a big thank you to everyone for their efforts.

So you can see there is a lot happening and it's an exciting time to be involved. I encourage you to consider how you can contribute, via the committee, a sub-committee or through volunteering. Our club is getting bigger and better and with a renewed focus on families and juniors we will need all the help we can to continue our success.

David Macauley