

by Brett Williams



# The Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance



*Police Association (Victoria) president Brian Rix (centre) prepares for the ride, along with Sergeant Scott McLean and Inspector Tom Furlong (ret) at the Victoria Police Memorial in Kings Domain*

**Police** union members from around the nation will head up a special memorial motorcycle ride from Melbourne and Sydney to Canberra this year. The inaugural Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance will honour Australia's 700-plus police officers who have given their lives in the line of duty since 1803.

A Victorian contingent of riders will set out from the Victoria Police Memorial in Kings Domain, Melbourne on September 17. Police Association of New South Wales members will lead riders out of Sydney the next day to meet up with their Victorian counterparts on the outskirts of Canberra.

From there, Australian Federal Police motorcycle officers will escort the combined party of riders through the streets of Canberra to the National Police Memorial for a special commemorative service.

Police Association (Victoria) president Brian Rix, who chairs a committee which oversees his state's part in the ride, said he would welcome the participation of police from other jurisdictions.

"We're encouraging our members in South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia to come over and join us," he said. "We can then all ride from here



Officers' motorcycles parked at the National Police Memorial in Canberra after a recent test run

in Melbourne and stop overnight in Merimbula.

"And, then, we'll ride over the top of the mountain to Canberra and meet up with everyone for the commemorative service. That will take place after we all ride around Parliament House and onto the National Police Memorial in Kings Park."

Mr Rix said that members of the public could join the ride as a way of showing their respect for the fallen officers who had served them and their communities.

Among others he expected to participate were some of the friends and family members of fallen officers, such as Victorian senior constable Renni Page. Snr Const Page died after a passing car struck him on the Hume Freeway in 2005.

He left behind his fiancée, Colleen Sheridan, who Mr Rix listed as a possible participant in the ride.

Others likely to take part in NSW, where Assistant Commissioner Mick Corboy heads up the relevant organizing committee, are Commissioner Andrew Scipione and former commissioner Tony Lauer.

Mr Rix expects that, in Victoria, Deputy Commissioner and Wall to Wall Ride patron Sir Ken Jones, a keen motorcycle rider, might also participate.

Organizers hope that the ride will not

only serve as a tribute to fallen police but also raise awareness of motorcycle safety and promote Police Legacy. The long-standing charity will receive money raised through the event.

"We all feel very sad when one of our members dies in tragic circumstances, but there's a whole organization behind supporting fallen members' families," Mr Rix said. "Members in Victoria donate voluntarily out of their pay to Police Legacy.

"And we also have people, who are not police officers, donating regularly to Legacy. One thing it does is support children – all the way through into university. So, where the ride is concerned, there will be the capacity to donate money to the respective states' police legacies."

Mr Rix said that, for those riding with the Victorian contingent, his committee had mapped out a designated route from Melbourne through to Merimbula and onto Canberra.

"We will encourage people to follow that route, and a support vehicle will follow along behind," he said. "There will also be certain points to meet and ride out from in Merimbula and the outskirts of Canberra, but it will be at everyone's own pace."

Mr Rix said the idea for the ride had

come from a conversation he had had with federal Labor MP Chris Hayes (Werriwa, NSW). Mr Hayes and former federal Liberal Party leader Brendan Nelson had heard of and discussed the Ride for the Fallen, staged annually in Texas.

"It is a big motorcycle ride they have over there commemorating police officers who are killed on duty," Mr Rix said.

"Chris and Brendan are both keen motorcyclists and wondered why we didn't do something similar in Australia, given that we had a wonderful national police memorial in Canberra.

"So, from that grew the idea to ride from the memorials in Melbourne and Sydney and all meet up for a commemorative service at the memorial in Canberra."

Mr Rix said that police-officer interest in the ride was already high, with many officers applying for September leave. He added that his organizing committee was looking into the possibility of billets for interstate riders in Victoria on the night before the event.

Broad interest in the ride has also come from the media in both Melbourne and Canberra.

Mr Rix said he hoped the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance would grow and, ultimately, become an annual event. **PJ**