

Gruelling ride to raise money

BY MARK SCOTT

It will be a long week for Mt Nasura's Rob Branch when he attempts to bike ride 1000 kilometres for Western Australians suffering from cancer.

The red sky ride saw 22 cyclists riding from Perth on February 27 through Harvey, Dunsborough, Augusta, Bridgetown, Wagin, York and home to Perth on March 6.

All money raised goes to the SolarisCare Foundation.

Mr Branch said for him the ride was about the physical challenge.

"I've never been much of a sports person so the sense of achievement at the end will make it worth it," he said.

"My biggest worry is the harshness of the Australian sun.

"I'm a pretty sun-sensitive person so if I can make the week without severe sunburn and discomfort, it'll be a victory."

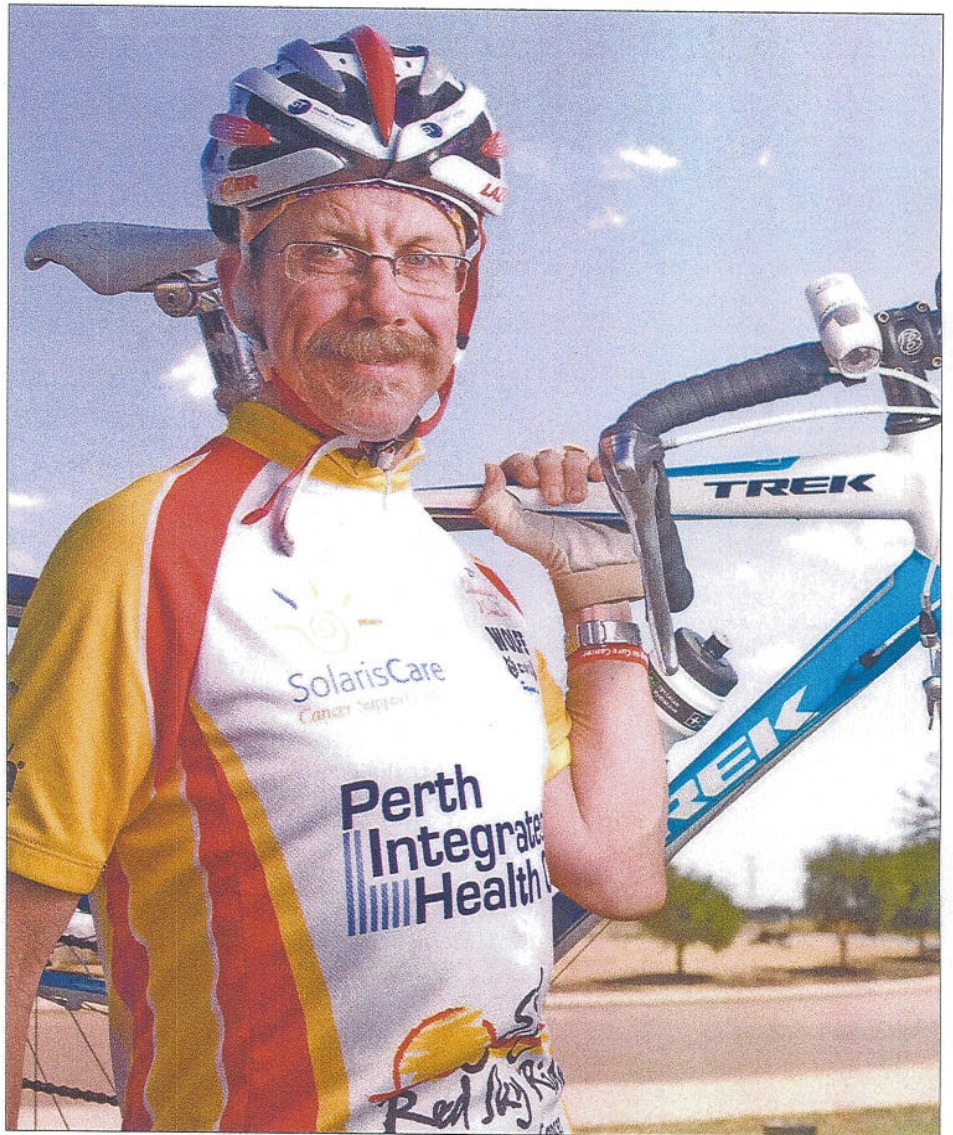
Each of the riders has been raising money through sponsorship, which Mr Branch said he was worried about at first.

"I didn't think I'd make enough money but it turns out I'm doing fifth best of the group," he said.

The SolarisCare Foundation run three cancer support centres in Perth for cancer patients and their families.

SolarisCare chief executive David Edwards said the centres were sort of a soft landing place for cancer patients.

"We offer information, act as a drop-in centre where patients and families can come for tea and a chat, as well as a range of complimentary therapies like acupuncture, massage and reflexology to help," he said. "Patients come in suffering from the difficulties of sickness and dealing with the invasiveness of their treatment and the stress that comes with it and when they leave you can see it's seeped away a bit."



Cyclist Rob Branch will raise money for charity.

The foundation provides all of its services free of charge and it runs solely on donations.

"Unfortunately sickness is expensive, so everything here is free," Mr Edwards said.

"Red sky ride have been an absolute

God send, they've raised over \$750 000 in four years.

"They take the experiences of the patients we have here and use that to drive them. It really is incredible."

If you want to sponsor Rob or find out more visit www.redskyride.org.au.