

MALLEE RALLY 2012

On the Queen's Birthday weekend, WICEN members trekked to Lake Tyrell near Sea Lake to provide yet another safe Mallee Rally. In addition to the Amateur stations was one point operating UHF CB only. Most operators with some family members came up and camped at the main control area ready for the briefing on the Saturday night.

This is an event that allows many locals to have a go as well as the regular racers. It was part of the Australian off road championship (AORC) this year as well as the Victoria off road championship (VORC). Approximately 120 vehicles of various classes were entered to do the four (VORC) or five (AORC) 90km laps of the off road salt lake course. These consist of buggies, modified trucks, standard and modified 4WDs and 2WDs. Quiet a few don't make it around the course, some don't even make it to the first checkpoint, but the leading vehicles manage the sandy course at an average 100km/h.

15 voice stations including 11 packet field stations were setup around the course plus three operators manning Net control. A portable 9m mast was used at Net Control to run 2m voice net and 70cm packet off a dual band vertical antenna and a beam for the UHF CB net which was used for one checkpoint, but mainly for recovery vehicles comms.

Two new packet stations were assembled and checked and others performed an on air test on the Saturday. Plans to test deviation settings for a number of stations fell foul to Murphy when both Test Sets brought up did not want to perform correctly powered off modified sine wave portable generators. The software used to record and send data was TRAK 3.7g. Sunday morning all stations where operational with voice and most with packet on air prior to the start. Apart from one checkpoint where a new DC/DC converter computer power supply failed in the first few minutes, most stations worked direct all day to Net Control with their car times and status received successfully. The search of data allowed missing cars to be narrowed down to packet checkpoints and queried by voice at intermediate checkpoints and recovery details obtained. Keeping track of the leading cars allowed for timely PA announcements as they were due to arrive at the finish line.

The day started with a bit of cloud keeping the morning not too cold and cleared throughout the day to sun. At the end of the day, most returned to the camp for a few well-deserved drinks and a chance to catch up with old friends. The clear skies for the evening allowed those to sit out who wished to enjoy the campfire and a few ports or whisky before rising to an icy morning.

The Event Commander was Paul 3YYF, Marie made muffins and the crew were Graeme 3GPT, Carol 3FCLT, Ross 3SF, Peter 3FPGD, Graham 3KMG & John 3UA, Gerard 3GER, John 3CFH, Nic 5ZAT, Bruce 3UV & Annie, Peter JUG, Col 3BLE & Claire, Gordon 3FGC, Maurie 3VLR & Linda 3VLS, Mark VK3ZR, John 3CFH, Don 3SP, Ian 3IFM, Barry and Ray 3HSR.

Paul Elvey VK3YYF