

MALLEE RALLY 2013

On the Queen's Birthday weekend, WICEN members trekked to Lake Tyrell near Sea Lake to assist with safety and vehicle tracking at the 40th anniversary Mallee Rally. In addition to the Amateur stations was one point operating UHF CB only. A couple of operators camped at their checkpoint, but most 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 Victoria off road championship (VORC). 125 vehicles of various classes were entered to do the four 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, with more rollovers and recoveries required than usual this year, but no serious injuries fortunately. The leading vehicles manage the sandy course at an average 100km/h and the first vehicle was clocked at the finish at over 200km/h.

15 field stations, including 12 packet stations were setup around the course plus two 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. A HF link to Melbourne was run by Graham VK3KMG from his checkpoint to John VK3BAF at home.

The software used to record and send data was TRAK 3.8. Sunday morning all stations were operational with voice and most with packet on air prior to the start. Most stations worked direct all day to Net Control with their 4158 car reports of times and status, 89 chat messages and 1 formal message 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.

Some of the comments passed on to the organisers were; leave a portable loo near the camp; clearer car no. marking to avoid confusion between 6s and 8s; and a yellow flag at each checkpoint to warn approaching vehicles of hazards such as stopped/rolled vehicles on track. Other comments were; announcing non-starter no.s; have a data/training officer check equipment/data setup on the Saturday afternoon/evening; operators need an assistant to help record/enter data for vehicles.

The day started with a cool morning and was mostly sunny throughout the day. 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 lightly cloudy skies for the evening allowed those to sit out who wished to enjoy the campfire and a few ports or whisky before rising to a cool morning.

The Event Commander was Paul VK3YYF, Training officer was Ian VK3IFM and the crew were VK's, David 3VP, John 3ZRX & David, Ross 3SF, Graham 3KMG & John, Gerard 3GER, Nic 5ZAT, Bruce 3UV, Peter 3JUG, Col 3BLE & Claire, Gordon 3FGC, Maurie 3VLR & Linda 3VLS, John 3CFH, Don 3SP, Lachlan 3FELZ, Barry, Marie, Monica & Phil.

Total travel recorded was 15,270 kms.

Paul Elvey VK3YYF