

## MALLEE RALLY 2018

On the Queen's Birthday weekend, WICEN members trekked to Lake Tyrell near Sea Lake to assist with safety and vehicle tracking at the Mallee Rally. Most operators 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 ARB Australian Off Road Racing Championship – round 3 and Victoria Off Road Club Shield – round 5. Around 90 vehicles of various classes start to do either two or four 100km laps of the off road salt lake course. These consist of buggies, modified trucks, standard and modified 4WDs and 2WDs. Quite a few don't make it around the course, with a few rollovers and recoveries, but no serious injuries fortunately. The leading vehicles manage the rough sandy course averaging over 100km/h. The only serious incident was a photographer/media person at finish filming one car finishing and turning around and walking into path of another finisher, unsure of just what injury. This was immediately responded to by the ambulance on site and did not involve WICEN.



15 field stations, including 11 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, 2m APRS and 70cm packet off a dual band vertical antenna and a beam for the UHF CB net for recovery vehicles comms.



A small team pitched in to get the mast up on the Saturday afternoon, however we did not have our usual operator camped at Box Clump checkpoint at the far end of course to do the usual check on all bands and instead performed some local tests. Fortunately the comms checked out OK early Sunday morning. The recovery official on the CB was pleased again that he could talk with all recovery vehicles around course with the help of us providing a UHF CB and yagi on our mast.

This year we had a few new F call operators and were able to pair up a couple with others at voice and packet spots. The software used to record and send data was TRAK 3.9h. There were a total of 2,300 car reports of times and status and 55 chat messages received. The search of data allowed missing cars to be narrowed down to packet checkpoints and queried by voice at the remaining two checkpoints and recovery details obtained. Keeping track of the leading cars allowed for timely PA announcements as the leaders were due to arrive at the finish line.

The travel to and from the checkpoints was tracked with APRS for a number of operators that had a tracker in their vehicle. The APRS was received directly at HQ on a D710A radio that was also being used for voice in VHF/VHF mode and monitored on TRAK. The audio for a regular text to voice announcement of callsigns and event details was also feed into the D710A from a laptop via a signal link device.

The rain in the week leading up to the event made some of the course a bit slippery for operators going to checkpoints and competitors. Saturday evening and Sunday stayed clear of rain with a breeze, the bit of cloud stopped it getting down to the icy mornings we sometimes have Sunday and Monday. At the end of the Sunday, a number of operators returned to the camp for a well-deserved rest and a chance to catch up with old friends and some new operators. Below is a link to the experience by Mark VK3MDH.

<https://www.thehikingham.com/news/2018/6/13/mallee-rally-2018>

The Event Commander was Paul VK3YYF and the crew were VK's, Chris 3CJK, Norm 3XCI, Steve 3FSWB, Gerard 3GER, Peter 3LSN, Ross 3SF, John 3CFH, Ian 3IFM, Mike 3FMFA, John 3ZRX, Maurie 3VLR & Linda 3VLS, Gordon 3FGC, Mark 3ZR, Don 3SP & Barbara 3FBJP, Mark 3MDH, Lucas 3FLDC, Lachlan 3LEL and Paul 3FPDA.

Total travel recorded was about 14,980 kms.

Paul Elvey VK3YYF  
25/7/18