



Scootaville[™] NSW, 2026



The NSW 2026 Scootaville Event was disappointing. We couldn't get sufficient starters to hold the scooter tour but decided to go ahead with the "Walk for Veterans" event at Mt Panorama.

On Tuesday, the 24th March, a few of us left Brisbane in our rented Sixt 12 seater HiAce and headed for Bathurst. We decided to do the trip in a leisurely fashion and not attempt it as we would have 40 years ago. What do they say? "Age shall not weary them" - we've got news for them, we can definitely say she ain't what she used to be, once upon a time we'd have hopped in the car, driven from Brisbane to Bathurst, stopping only for fuel, then on arrival washed the car then gone to the pub for a bunch of beers. The old DOB put a stop to all that. The brain thinks it could still do it but it's terribly let down by the body.

First stop was Coffs Harbour, a 4 and a bit hour drive from Brisbane. We always wondered where the name came from and it seems Coffs Harbour was named after John Korff (1799–1870), a shipbuilder, ship owner, and insurance surveyor. Originally known as "Korff's Harbour," the name was derived from his observation of the harbour as a safe shelter during a gale in 1847. The name was later changed by surveyors to "Coff's Harbour" in 1861, eventually dropping the apostrophe.



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It was lunch time when we got to Coffs, so we headed straight for the Jetty and pulled up at the Fisherman's Co-op. We'd been there before and knew you got a good meal at a good price and once again we weren't disappointed. After lunch it was back into the bus for the next leg of the trip.

We'd planned to overnight at Taree, a further bit over two and a half hours down the road and eventually we pulled up at Taree's Railway Lodge Motel. We'd never stayed at the Railway before, we'd picked it as it was very keenly priced and also offered a Continental breakfast. We thought we'd give it a go, after all anything has to be better than having to blow up your bed.





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We were pleasantly surprised, the Railway Lodge wasn't 5 star but it was clean, the beds were comfortable, the breakfast was plentiful and we'd definitely stay there again. Way back it was constructed as a railway barracks to accommodate train drivers, firemen, and guards stationed in the area and during World War II, a large underground air raid shelter was built at the site which was reportedly to be used for safety during air strikes and later became a place in which local kids would play.

Following its functional use by the railway, it was converted into a motel, which now features railway memorabilia, a steam engine and a model railway highlighting its heritage. It also contains a very eclectic collection of unusual antiques, such as the old piece of dental equipment at right - we can remember being "serviced" by this piece of equipment which has left me with a very healthy negative phobia of going to the dentist.



After a satisfying breakfast, we left Taree for the 6 hour run to Bathurst. Unfortunately the direct route via the Great Western Highway (GWH) was not available due to the bridge problem at Victoria Pass. We decided to go via Windsor/Richmond then up the Bells Line of Road to Lithgow instead of using the GWH then the detour via Darling Causeway to Bell.

A few had told us not to use the Bells Line of Road as it was windy, hilly and with the GWH closed from Mt Victoria to Lithgow, it was sure to be very busy. A hundred years ago, when we were posted to Richmond, we'd driven the Bells line of Road many times and not found it too bad, so we thought we'd give it a go.

We were pleasantly surprised, we virtually had the road from Richmond to Bell all to ourselves and it wasn't until we got to Bell, where the Darling Causeway ejected its detourers, that we met any traffic.

We wondered where the name came from, why not just Bell's Road?. It seems back in 1823 Archibald Bell Jn, a 19-year-old explorer and pastoralist (19? Imagine a 19 year old doing that today) who was born in the Hawkesbury area, mapped the route across the Blue Mountains by following Aboriginal trails. For some years the route was known as Bell's Road but in 1838 in a land sale advertisement in the Sydney Monitor newspaper, it was referred to Bells Line of Road. The name stuck.



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Once again, to break the Taree - Bathurst journey into manageable chunks and in need of a leisurely lunch, we stopped at the Richmond Club, formally the Richmond RSL. Back in our Richmond days we'd spent many hours in the (then) RSL and from where we were first introduced to poker machines. As you would expect, in the 60 or so years since we'd first pulled a pokie handle, the Club has been considerably upgraded but we were able to recognise the area where the small number of machines used to live (the red roof section above).

After lunch, and as the temp had dropped a million degrees, we found a Vinnies type shop to get some warm clothes. Suitably clothed, we left Richmond and set off up through Kurrajong for the hour and a half trip to Lithgow. From Lithgow it was only 45 minutes to Bathurst where we arrived late in the afternoon.





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Once again, the Bathurst Show Society Association was most welcoming, allowing us use of one of their pavilions and facilities from the Wednesday until the following Monday.

Having done this many times previously, it didn't take us long to unpack, blow up the bed, sort all our gear and in no time at all it was as if we'd been there for weeks.



On Friday morning we were invited to the morning coffee event held at the RSL Club by the RSL Sub-Branch. Barry Parsons, the Sub-Branch's President made us feel most welcome and looked after us the whole time we were in Bathurst.

Thanks Barry.





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Some of the people at the Bike Show.



But - you don't know these things until you try them, it was a pleasant morning, the weather was fine, some of the bikes were worth the same as a small house, the entertainment was great but it wasn't what we needed. You live and learn. We will do it again but we'll try for a weekend when there isn't a lot on.



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Bathurst, with a population of about 45,000, is a great town. Gold, which was found in the area back in 1851, attracted thousands of hopefuls turning Bathurst into a busy commercial hub. The magnificent old Victorian buildings in the town confirm that Bathurst was a very wealthy town, back in the Gold rush era it was the regional hub for transporting gold that was discovered in nearby Ophir, Sofala and Hill End. It has a very active and progressive Council and today there seems to be an event happening each weekend with the Mt Panorama race putting Bathurst on the world map.

Bathurst - we love it.

Today there are 16 historic hotels in the town as well as 3 major Clubs, the Golf Club, RSL Club and the Panthers Leagues Club. We dined in the RSL or League's club every night. Below - at the League's Club.





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Sunday morning saw us up with the sparrows, a quick tub and as it was about fifty degrees below zero, it was on with the long Johns then down to the Mt Panorama circuit for the Walk for Veterans event. We met with the caretaker who unlocked a number of gates for us but who didn't have one key which opened the gate giving us access to a power point. Didn't bother Keith Porter, with a bit of help from Mike Gahan (left) and Wal Shakoff he grabbed a piece of ply, laid it on the ground under the fence and slid through and plugged in our long extension cord.

Coffee was assured.



We'd promoted the "Walk" event as providing a barbecue after everyone had completed the circuit and true to form, Woolworths offered to provide all the ingredients needed, sausages, bread, sauces, paper towel, everything - very generous of them. We'd dragged our catering lady, Sue Trimmer, out of bed that morning, hours earlier than she'd normally rise and asked her if she would prepare the barbecue for the walkers.

Sue got to work, barked out a few orders, got the tables set up where she wanted, warmed up the RSL Sub-Branch barbecue, got the urn on, set out the tables with the bread, sauces, salt and pepper, serviettes, all ready for the many walkers we were expecting.



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Unfortunately the walkers didn't come. We had a few turn up, including mayor Robert "Stumpy" Taylor and a few of our troop had intended to give it a go.



Some of the walkers, below, getting ready to hit the track and then the chequered flag to send them on their way.



The track at Mt Panorama is 6.2km in length, and from start climbs 175 metres to the top of the mountain. Walking the circuit is no cake walk, those that did complete the circuit did a marvellous job.



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John Barber did a marvellous job walking the full circuit with the help of his walking sticks.

We must thank WorkControl who provided two vehicles and two blokes and provided safety vehicles for us.



Allan George, taking a breather, while conquering the mountain.



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First over the line was Sean O'Toole, having completed the 6.2km in one hour twenty minutes - a helluva good effort. We weren't there to confirm this and Sean being a Civvy we initially doubted it but after we had it confirmed by several ex-Service personnel, we accept it.

A civvy winning? not what we expected.



After we'd barbecued out, packed everything up, panicked the area, we returned to our lodgings. Part of the showground area was taken up by the Ford Falcon Car Club.



If you were a Falcon person, you would have been in Ford heaven. There were all models, all colours and their owners were only too happy to discuss their car.



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That evening we decided to leave next day (Monday) instead of staying until Tuesday as originally planned. We didn't make any money for our charities, in fact it cost us a bit but we learned a lot. We'll do it again next year but with a few changes.

Monday morning came, we packed everything except for a small overnight bag, loaded all our belongings onto Ian Best's trailer and headed for Port Macquarie. We decided to pass Taree on the way back and instead overnight at Port Macquarie as John Barber lived there and it would give us a shorter trip next day. We stayed at the Excelsior Motel which was the cheapest and which we found perfectly suitable. Tuesday morning came and we set off for the 540km run up to Brisbane. We had a breather at the big banana in Coffs and they expect the [Coffs bypass](#) will be open later this year which will make the Brisbane to Melbourne trip a breeze.



We pulled up in Brisbane late in the afternoon, unpacked everything, everyone went their own way - and that was Scootaville NSW for 2026.