



Quinn Myers	Kawasaki ZX14	Ben Warden (leader)	Honda CBR1000
Garry Boucher	Kawasaki ZX14	Misho Zrakic	Honda CBR1000
Aiden Baker	Kawasaki ZX10	Paul Southwell	Honda CBR1000
John Willis	Kawasaki ZX10	Pina Garasi (1/2 rear)	Honda CBR600
Ronny	Kawasaki ZX6	Jesvin George (1/2 rear)	Honda CBR600
Phil Hotschilt	Suzuki GSXR1300	Kurn Bridgeman	Honda CBR600
Tony Stegmar (rear)	Suzuki GSXR1000	Rob Langer	BMW F700
Glenn Aspden	Suzuki GSXR1000	Cindy Lee	Triumph 675
Steve Mudford	Suzuki GSXR1000		<i>17 bikes, 17 people</i>

Quinn was returning after a break and volunteered to do the write up. So this is just a short note about my first overnighter with the group.

Preparation: A few days before Dargo I went to Steve Mudford for suspension tuning from stock settings to suit my weight. After the job I started feeling the front and I realised I never felt the front before. Good realisation after completing 15,000 kms on a new bike! Rides are now less bumpy but it still needs fine tuning.

On Friday night I squeezed all my stuff into the small Ventura bag and it was just holding up all the stuff. I couldn't find space for shoes so that could be problem if the pub doesn't let me in wearing thongs. Well, I can come back wearing motorcycle boots underneath pants.

CBR600RR didn't get any special treatment which is the norm at my house. Just a hasty wash, correct tyre pressure, Airhawk cushion and chain lube. I dared to buy 4 litres of SAE 80 transmission oil from Supercheap. My usual chain lube, Motul, is about \$22 for a small can whereas I got 4 litres of transmission oil for \$40. Great value for money. More importantly, the manual recommends using SAE 80 or 90 to lube the chain rather than aftermarket lubes. However, the oil is not sticky and you need to wipe off the excess thoroughly.

Ride Day 1: Tony had a crash before reaching the meeting point on his near new Suzuki; seems like new tyres were to blame. A few cable ties held the fairings together. He opted for rear rider.

I saw Quinn Myers on a red Kawasaki with a hardtop case. Steve Mudford was on a reworked Suzuki which he was preparing for the ride. It's been a long time since I met Rob Langer and he is on a different bike every time. Rob, do you want to adopt me?

After the pre-ride brief we went through Tyres with some good sweepers and reached Bairnsdale for lunch. Last year this time I was camping at Little River (at the diversion to Ensay-Doctors Flat

Road on the Great Alpine Road) and thinking next year I should visit these roads on my motorcycle. And YES...I am glad that I did it with another 16 riders.

The Bruthen Omeo Bruthen loop was really enjoyable. The road surface was coarse with good grip like a track. However, I didn't really push myself though I tried to do a few late turnings on some corners. Pina Garasi was riding pillion with Misho Zrakic on the CBR1000RR for the loop. Tony is really fast on tight corners so I 'let' him pass me and enjoy the corners while I held my own pace at the rear end.

After regrouping at Bruthen we set off to Dargo. This last leg was tiring for me and exciting for some others. Should I have opted for the shorter route with Paul Southwell? No way! Later Ronny described the last leg as "head-spinning" and he had few ciggies soon after he finished the ride.

Night: Well, I didn't expect such decent accommodation. Our hosts Dan and Maggie were very nice ensuring everyone was comfortable. Ronny was my roommate and we had a bit of chat. Seems like his wife is happy to let him ride on Sundays and overnights. All you middle-aged divorced riders up there, you better ask Ronny for tips on how to find an ideal wife.

The small 'town' Dargo pub was busy and there was a long queue to order dinner. On our table conversations flowed regarding insurance on the road and track, toll cameras, speed cameras, tablet/touchscreen friendly website for MSR etc. I can assure you that there was no discussion about dodging cameras and getting insurance cover on track crashes.

Tassie photo presentation followed dinner which prompted some crash discussions and jokes. While some were still enjoying the night I retired to bed at 10pm. I didn't get a good night's sleep due to noises and woke up at 4:30 am and plugged in my ear plugs which resulted in not hearing the alarm at 7:30am. Ronny had a hard time waking up, sleeping like a koala with earplugs.

Ride Day 2: After breakfast I did rode around the town which looked to Aiden Baker like a tyre warm up. No mate, I warm them right at the corners. Good bye to Dargo and back to nice roads.

I don't know where exactly we went but the roads were good, the weather warming quickly. I did open up the throttle on some straights to get more thrills but never hit top speed. I thought I was going really fast until Phil Hotschilt went past with ease. I have noticed the Phil and Garry hang out together most of the time, riding and corner marking together.

Roads to Licola were tight and the strong north winds were not kind to me. I just cruised and went rear rider on the way back to make sure I'm not holding anyone up. We had a longer than normal break here. At the end of the Licola road I saw Misho and Ronny stopped for a while. Later I learnt that a speeding bird hit Ronny on the head throwing him off balance while cornering which ended in a low slide for Ronny. Ronny is not happy and minor cosmetic damage to his Kawasaki. Watch out for angry birds. Tip: attach some cable ties on your helmet.

Close Call: Somewhere on Day 2 there was this long straight with a left hander while going uphill. Just before cornering I realised the corner is not wide or the pace is too fast. Well, I am stuffed; everything is now going on slow motion. SOS SOS. I can see the woods and thinking for a split second how bad the bike will look after the crash. I don't remember whether I have backed off a little from the throttle or continued the same pace but the bike is now leaning hard into the corner, almost like falling as my eyes see the bitumen so close, I can now hear something grinding to the road, maybe the bike is falling and going to grind more body parts. No more riding for next two months. However, after a split second I realised the bike didn't fall off, the corner is almost covered and the grinding was on my toe slider. Phew! That was really close. Heart rate continued to be in red line for a while. But hey, I learned how far the bike is capable to lean. I should do that again with control. That was fun. No need to say I took the next 10 corners at ease; it did scare me but also boosted confidence on the bike.

Wind Up: During the last leg Ronny was taking it easy after the crash and I cruised along at the rear. We finished the ride at Longwarry North and I followed Aiden Baker to the freeway after a short break. It was 1066km door to door and the chain has still got lube in it. When is the next Dargo ride? Is that what you are thinking too?

Other things as I remember them, not in any particular order:

- Paul Southwell did a board walk to market the new MSR T-shirts, black or white
- Misho Zrakic opted for a yellow T-shirt.
- Glenn Aspden has got a special 'bond' with his Suzuki, especially at the rego area.
- John Wills was flying on his new Kawa with flat bars. He rode like an ex-TT racer.
- Pina Garasi, I miss you here at the back end.
- Ben Warden had cruise control set betting on \$150 despite going through \$180 sweepers, \$250 straights and \$50 tights.
- Cindy Lee's Triumph covers corner to corner distance smoothly. I like that engine.
- Kurn Bridgeman had the same pillion bag as mine. He rides on weekends and gets paid on weekdays for touring around the country. Now, that is my dream life.
- Jesvin George was sporting a bright yellow jacket over the leathers which made the TAC and Wu Tang Clan happy.

Jesvin George