

The Big Push

Wodonga to Melbourne 320kms November 14th to November 19th

Saturday the 13th of November

We drove from Whittlesea to Wodonga and stayed free at the Blazing Stump motel with complimentary breakfast. The Lions club of Wodonga hosted a sausage sizzle in town for us. We had dinner at the Blazing Stump hotel complimentary and the staff ran a meat raffle raising \$380. The News Weekly and the Border Mail newspapers both ran our story.

Sunday the 14th of November

We left Wodonga at 07:30am being sent off by family and members of the Wodonga Lions. We ran for 1 hour before rain set in and very heavy too. Jason sat in the pilot vehicle for the two hours until the rain stopped and then back in the wheelchair he went. Jason was having a ball, lots of big smiles and excitement coming from him. We had a handful of cars pull over and donate some money, and lots of cars and trucks tooting at us showing their support. David our pilot man had started counting the white broken lines on the road for entertainment. Terry my wife was counting down the kms to the next truck stop to use the Ladies. This was the longest trip of our journey and managed to run 56kms and walk 13kms. I was extremely sore, probably from running a bit quick. We arrived in Wangaratta at 5pm being greeted by family at the Gateway motel which kindly put us up with a complimentary breakfast.



Monday the 15th of November

I woke up extremely sore and sunburnt. I got interviewed by 3SR FM and the Chronicle newspaper ran our story. Jason woke up very excited and had another big smile on his face. He was giving everyone who stopped to chat to him a big high five. We took off at 08:00am and our first stop was the Glenrowan McDonald's. A police lady chased us from Wangaratta to Glenrowan to donate \$20 after hearing our story. We also received numerous donations from people in the service centre. I was really struggling on this leg of our trip as my legs were sore but just looked at Jason and seen how happy he was kept me going at a slower pace. We reached the Benalla exit, but there was still another 9kms to run. I was really struggling at the 5km to go mark and when I reached the 4km to go mark, Jason turned his head at me, gave me the biggest smile, his big blue eyes lit up and he reached over to give me a high five. It was like him saying "thankyou Dad." This brought a tear to my eye and from that point on I was going to push myself forward. I jogged into Benalla were the Lions club greeted us into town at 14:30pm staying at the Top of the Town motel also with a complimentary breakfast. 37kms ran and 5kms walked. For dinner that night I felt like Chinese food. We sat in the restaurant and had the best Chinese food ever. A couple sitting two tables over come and introduced themselves to us after they finished their dinner. They own a book store three doors down and offered 4 boxes of books for our fundraiser night which we were greatly appreciative of and they left. An hour after, we finished our meal and asked the waitress for the bill. She replied the bill had already been taken care of by that lovely couple. My wife and I both felt embarrassed but couldn't believe how many nice people in this world existed until now.



Tuesday the 16th of November

We left Benalla at 07:30am for Euroa. Once again we received lots of tooting and cars and trucks pulling over to donate and support us. Jason was still as happy as ever and I was determined to run the whole trip. It was half way to Euroa when the Win news crew pulled us over for a story about our fundraiser aired tonight. We received lots of exposure through this. I knew once we reach Euroa there was going to be school kids out the front of their school to greet us which they did giving us high fives as we ran past. We arrived in Euroa at 15:00pm 100% running, staying at the Jolly Swagman also with a complimentary breakfast. The teacher at the primary school (Ian) was also involved in the Lions club of Euroa. Ian told us he had advertised for the township of Euroa to come along to their local park for a free BBQ at 05:30pm to support Jamie and Jason Egan's fundraiser. There we were officially welcomed into their town by the Mayor of Euroa Howard and welcomed by around 100 community faces all making us feel very welcome. We raised over \$1,000 from the Euroa Township which was very overwhelming. I had another bad night waking up in pain from my legs many times, but I knew by know we were half way to Melbourne.



Wednesday the 17th of November

Jason's birthday. We woke up early and had another interview with 3SR FM radio wishing us well with the rest of our trip and announcing Jason's birthday which Jason received lots of birthday wishes from the community. We left Euroa at 07:30am with Ian on his push bike riding along with us until we got out of town. At the exit out of town, the Telegraph newspaper did a story on us which covered the Euroa region. I felt pretty good running this leg of the trip, I had mastered the speed I had to run at. This leg of the journey we had more cars and trucks pulling over for donations and support than ever as by now we had plenty of media exposure. We stopped at the Avenel service station for some lunch which is 20kms before Seymour. When we walked through the doors the lady behind the counter come over and wished Jason a happy birthday. After we finished lunch the lady then brought out a birthday cake with candles and sang happy birthday to Jason. We then headed for Seymour where the Lions club was waiting to greet us with fire trucks and a police vehicle which escorted us into town. They all had their flashing lights going which Jason was very excited about and couldn't keep his eyes off them. Once again we jogged 100% of this leg of our journey arriving at 16:00pm. We ended up in a park in Seymour in a rotunda where the fire brigade, police and members of the lions club had a cake and sang happy birthday to Jason. We then went to La Porchetta's where the owner (Kay) was having us stay in her home and wanted us to celebrate Jason's birthday at her restaurant. As we arrived at La Porchetta's, we were greeted by Kay's family and friends with balloons on the table for Jason. Kay also had a birthday cake for Jason and everyone sang happy birthday to Jason once again. All the staff at La Porchetta's donated their days wage to our fundraiser as well as \$1 from

every pizza sold and donations from the customers. Kay's grandson (Austin) made Jason a hand written card wishing him well and stating they will be friends forever, it was very touching.



Thursday the 18th of November

This leg of our trip is by far the hardest, 67kms and lots of big hills to climb so we wanted to get an early start 05:30am just when it got light. Once again Kay and her family come down to the park to send us off with a poster showing their support. Our first stop was a service station 8kms out of Seymour where we met a lady who had seen us on the news. She opened her purse and gave us her last \$50 note in it which doesn't get any more generous. We reached Broadford which was 25kms down the road where a man in a 4wd pulled us over. He said he wanted to catch us in Seymour but missed us and drove down the Hume looking for us to give us a \$100 cheque, once again overwhelmed. ABC Wodonga radio called to do another phone interview. As we approached Wandong just before we got off the Hume Highway there was some roadwork's being carried out. The workmen seen us and gave us a bottle of cold water and stopped all traffic to let us run on the road for 500 metres being escorted by one of their trucks with flashing lights, once again Jason was fascinated with this. As we ran past Wandong it rained for about an hour where Jason sat in the pilot vehicle while I pushed the wheelchair empty. Once the rain cleared Jason was back in his wheelchair. We ran into Whittlesea at around 16:00pm jogging 100%. Waiting for us in Whittlesea was another fire truck to escort us into town with flashing lights and its siren sounding. My daughter Kristy was nearby which I picked her up over my shoulders and ran 200 metres into town. Once we were in town, the Lions

club of Whittlesea were there running a BBQ for us and collecting donations. We had a handful of locals cheering us into Whittlesea as that is our home town. We got to sleep in our own beds this night.



Friday the 19th of November

Our final day. We arrived into Whittlesea at 07:00am for a 08:00am start. We met family, friends and lions club members at a café in town where my work mates Bernie and Bernie, and Justin also attended. This café has been very supportive of our event with every dollar donated in their money tin, they were matching dollar for dollar. Justin ran with us for 10kms of our last leg which was very enjoyable to have company. This leg had a fun feeling about it knowing it was all coming to an end. Between Whittlesea and South Morang, it was amazing how many vehicles were tooting at us and also stopping to

donate money. By now my legs looked like balloons, I was amazed how big they had swollen. I was in a fair bit of pain, but once again looking at Jason and knowing we had just about completed our journey kept me going. We kept creeping closer and closer to the city and I was thinking, "We are actually going to complete this." As we got closer to the city, it was getting harder with the extra pedestrians and traffic to move freely, there was a lot of stop starting. We finally arrived in the CBD at around 14:30pm, 100% jogging. Kristy was once again nearby for me to put her on my shoulders and run out the last 200 metres. As we arrived into federation square there were family, friends, and workmates there to greet us and cheer us home. I can't describe the feeling of actually accomplishing what would be the biggest thing I will ever achieve in my life.

Saturday the 20th of November

Our fundraiser night at the Heritage reception centre, Epping. We had around 400 people attend this great night. It was overwhelming the response we had for donations of items for our fundraising night and Fosters supplying the alcohol. The majority of items had bidding wars fiercely going on and we got some great money for them including Sport 927's TV which topped the auction at \$770. The \$10 helium balloons which had a number under them to match your prize sold like hot cakes, 100 balloons sold within 15 minutes. I was once again overwhelmed by the Tatura Milk company for donating \$5,000 on the night. The band playing at our night generously donated their time were a huge hit with everyone. The night was very successful due to lots of people wanting to help out doing some jobs to make everything run smooth. A big thankyou to Amanda Rabbito who organised the whole night, what a great job well done. We managed to raise \$27,000 overall for the night which was huge and very successful.

Conclusion

Overall our fundraiser for Jason raised just over \$50,000. This is well beyond our expectations of \$35,000. With the funds we intend to modify our vehicle so that Jason can be wheeled in and out of our vehicle in his wheelchair. We intend on fitting a ceiling hoist in our home, one in the bathroom and one in Jason's bedroom. We are also hoping to speed up the process of a skin biopsy test to diagnose Jason's condition which is so rare, it is unheard of in Australia. The skin biopsy will be done in Melbourne and then sent overseas for testing. Any left over funds, which there is bound to be at least \$10,000, will sit in Jason's bank until he requires new disability equipment such as a wheelchair. We would have liked to spend some of the money on buying Jason something special for himself, however there is nothing Jason really needs as he doesn't play with much except a touch screen computer which we already have for him. Jason enjoys the simplest things in life such as watching kids play in the yard and also running our marathons. He is the happiest content kid which we all could take a leaf out of Jason's book. There are far too many people to thank who has contributed to Jason's fundraiser in some way. I would like to say a big thankyou to everyone as we couldn't have achieved it without you. I do have to thank David Cordell for taking time off work and leaving his family to drive one of the pilot vehicles and also to my

wife Terry who drove the other pilot vehicle and endured an adventure of a lifetime together.

Jamie Egan

