

## **SCHOOLS CYCLING**

**Brynn Gilbertson // Chair**

### **SUMMARY**

Similar to the 2020 season, the 2021 Schools cycling season was impacted significantly by COVID-19.

After a very promising start to the season, it was a disappointing finish for Schools riders and event organisers as the end-of-year national MTB and road events both had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

### **EVENTS**

Of the 13 events currently sanctioned by Cycling New Zealand Schools, 8 were able to proceed.

The year kicked off strongly with two very well run and supported MTB events – the ŠKODA South Island MTB Champs hosted by Bike Methven and the ŠKODA North Island MTB Champs hosted by the Auckland MTB Club with support from Auckland Grammar School (XCO and XCR) and by the 440 MTB Park (Enduro and Downhill). There continues to be overwhelming support and interest in Schools MTB events. Further work was undertaken during the year on the entry process for over-subscribed events and we continue to consider ways of meeting the growing demand for MTB events.

In early July, the ŠKODA North Island and South Island Road Champs were held in Cambridge and Christchurch hosted by Red Events (North Island) and Schools Cycling Christchurch (South Island). The North Island event was immediately followed by the combined ŠKODA North Island and National Track Champs at the Velodrome in Cambridge. The track champs attracted a record number of just over 200 riders.

At the end of July, it was exciting that the ŠKODA North and South Island Cyclocross Champs were able to be held in Upper Hutt and Christchurch. While these inaugural events attracted small numbers, we do see cyclocross as a growth area for Schools cycling.

I would like to thank the organisers and host venues for their organisation of these successful events and their support of Schools cycling, particularly the Huttcross and Southerncross cyclocross clubs.

I would also like to acknowledge the organisers and clubs who, due to the impact of COVID-19 were unable to host their scheduled events, including Cycling Marlborough, the Marlborough MTB club and Cycling Southland. These organisations spent a great deal of time and effort, along with the event management team at Cycling New Zealand, to assess whether events could proceed under the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time.

In response to the cancellation of these events, we created the ŠKODA Virtual Tour and Virtual Challenge to offer alternative opportunities to Schools riders during the lock-downs. Both these events received positive engagement and feedback from our Schools riders.

## **OFF THE BIKE ACTIVITIES**

The inaugural Schools Cycling Focus Group meet regularly during the year. The meetings were well-attended by the 8 student riders and provided the Executive with valuable input on a wide range of topics. This initiative received strong support from Schools riders again this year and we look forward to their continued input.

Our new relationship with ŠKODA New Zealand as our naming sponsor for all our sanctioned events started on a strong footing and we welcomed their energetic and passionate input into Schools cycling.

During the lock-down period towards the end of 2021, the Schools Executive spent some time reviewing its five-year Strategic Plan. This followed the earlier release by Cycling New Zealand of its 2021-2028 Strategic Plan. Following those sessions, the Schools Executive agreed an updated vision for Schools Cycling being to “create a thriving Schools cycling community that promotes enjoyment, participation and competition”. To achieve this vision we will be guided by our core values of “fun, balance, innovation, inclusion, respect and collaboration”. We look forward to bringing this vision to life over the upcoming years.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

At the 2021 CNZ Annual Meeting weekend, we had the opportunity to recognise and congratulate our 2020 Outstanding Contribution award winners. These were Tessa Jenkins, Jonathan Hasler and Marie Laycock.

On behalf of Cycling New Zealand Schools, I thank all schools, riders, teachers, coaches, parents, event organisers, Commissaires, sponsors and volunteers for their support of Schools Cycling over another difficult year. Special thanks again to the events team at Cycling New Zealand. In response to COVID-19, the events team worked hard with our event organisers to potentially reschedule/modify their events and, when cancellation became the only option for some of them, worked hard to provide other opportunities for our Schools riders to participate against and engage with each other.

I would also like to acknowledge again the disappointment for our Schools riders, particularly those in their final year, of not being able to ride in the end-of-year events. We hope nonetheless that we may have achieved our new purpose of “igniting a lifelong passion for cycling” in you and that you continue to be involved in our great sport of cycling.