

SCHOOLS CYCLING

Brynn Gilbertson // Chair

SUMMARY

It has been great to be back in 2022, with almost all of our 13 events able to proceed and provide our Schools' riders with opportunities to participate, to compete and to have fun on their bikes.

EVENTS

The Schools' event year kicked off in the July school holidays. This was a very busy month with five island championship events taking place over three codes (road, track and cyclo-cross). The start of the July school holidays saw the SKODA South Island Road Champs take place in Christchurch and the SKODA North Island Road Champs in Cambridge. There was a great atmosphere at both events with riders enjoying being back after both events were cancelled in 2021, although entry numbers were down. The SKODA North Island Track Champs followed shortly after in Cambridge. Rounding out the July school holidays were the second ever Schools cyclocross events; the SKODA South Island Cyclocross Champs hosted by Cycling South Canterbury in Timaru, and the SKODA North Island Cyclocross Champs hosted by Cyclo Cross Hawkes Bay Club in Havelock North. 60-80 riders took part at each event. It was heartening that these numbers, although small, continue to grow in the second year of these events.

The next events on the calendar were the SKODA Southern Tour and SKODA Northern Tour. These went ahead after two years of cancellations with the support of Cuddon Engineering (SKODA Southern Tour) and Safetyfinder (SKODA Northern Tour). In both tours, riders get points towards the tour jerseys and ride for National titles in the Time Trial, Hill Climb and Criterium events.

The Schools' cycling season ended on a high with our SKODA National Road, Track and MTB events being held in October. The SKODA National Road Champs were held on the first weekend of the school holidays on new courses at Rongotea and Halcombe in the Manawatu. The new courses worked very well and we received excellent feedback. We will be using these courses again in 2023. Our final two events were held in the deep South with a number of athletes staying down to compete in the SKODA National Track and MTB Champs, along with the Yunca Junior Tour of Southland. Although numbers were down at the SKODA National Track Champs, spirits were high and the racing very competitive. The final event for 2022 was the SKODA National MTB Champs in Bluff. With this being the only Schools MTB event in 2022, there were a number of very excited riders and the weather in Bluff was stunning.

Our two events that could not go ahead were the SKODA South and North Island MTB Championships. These events were due to take place during summer tournament week but, unfortunately, were not able to proceed due to ongoing COVID

restrictions. On a positive note, both organisers (Coronet Peak and Rotorua MTB clubs) agreed to host the events in 2023.

A huge thanks to the organisers and host venues for all our events. Without your hard work and support, our events could not proceed. These included first-timers Cyclo-cross Hawkes Bay and Southland MTB Club as well as our regular event organisers – Canterbury Cycling, Red Events, Cycling South Canterbury, Cycling Marlborough and Cycling Southland. Special thanks also to the Events Team at Cycling New Zealand who work closely with these organisers as well as being the direct organisers of three of our events.

OFF THE BIKE ACTIVITIES

ŠKODA New Zealand continued as our naming sponsor for all our sanctioned events for a second year. This includes awarding all National and Island champions a special SKODA/Cycling New Zealand Schools winner's jersey. Thank you SKODA New Zealand for your continued support of Schools cycling in New Zealand over, what has been, two quite challenging years.

The Schools Cycling Focus Group meet regularly again during the year. This Group provides the Executive with valuable input from a riders' perspective on a wide range of topics. We look forward to their continued input in 2023.

We completed and published our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. This is available on our Cycling New Zealand Schools website. Our updated vision for Schools Cycling is 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".

Over recent years we have received a number of requests from our Junior Cycling Community to revisit road gearing restrictions. Following broad consultation, we determined that from 1 January 2023, no gearing restrictions will be in place for all our road events and a single gear restriction will be in place for our track events. We believe that these changes to gearing restrictions will remove barriers to participation, be cost effective for riders, ease understanding of gearing requirements and maintain consistency across Schools and RTX regulations, while maintaining safe and fair competitions for our riders. We thank you for all the thoughts and contributions we received on this issue.

The other matter that your Executive spent some time on during the year was the sustainability of our events. Entry numbers were down at almost all our events in 2022. We will continue to monitor this very closely this year to determine whether this is a temporary post-COVID impact or more permanent. Reduced rider numbers mean reduced entry fees and an increasing reliance on trust and council funding to sustain the financial viability of some of our events. We continue to look at options to increase our overall income and thereby provide us with greater certainty to proceed with our events. As a result, we have had to increase our rider levies and school affiliation fees for 2023. Other potential sources of increased income include

sponsorship and partnership arrangements, multi-year trust and council funding and financial support from our Schools' community through a "friends of schools cycling" foundation. We will update you as we progress these initiatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We were delighted to acknowledge Mike Simpson as our Schools Cycling Outstanding Contribution winner for 2021. This award recognised Mike's significant contribution to Schools cycling over a very long period. He has been involved in Schools cycling in the Manawatu region for the last 11 years. For most of that time, he has been the chair of Manawatu Schools Cycling. He has also been the WCNI representative on the CNZ Schools Executive for the last eight years and, in that role, has made a very valuable contribution to the governance of Schools cycling in New Zealand.

Finally, and on behalf of Cycling New Zealand Schools, I thank all schools, riders, teachers, coaches, parents, event organisers, Commissaires, sponsors and volunteers for their continued support of Schools Cycling. There are a lot of passionate people involved in School Cycling whose main objective is to provide opportunities for our Schools' riders to be involved in our great sport of cycling. I also wish all our final-year riders all the best and hope that in future years you continue to experience the pleasure of riding your bikes.