

# Kalianna School – Community Grant Recipient

## Dave Fagg

Kalianna is a school on the move. The facilities are being upgraded, a ground-breaking partnership with La Trobe University has been signed, and its team collected four gongs at the recent Principals Association of Specialist Schools Victoria awards night.

So it is no surprise that Kalianna implemented an innovative bike education program with support from the City of Greater Bendigo. The grant supported an in-school program, and subsidised several students to attend a bicycle camp in north-east Victoria.

To find out more, we visited Kalianna School, tucked away in North Bendigo. PE teacher Christine Goodes guides us through the bustle of building works, and explains that all of her students previously had little experience with cycling: they may not have a bicycle at home, or their parents may not have the time to teach them.

We sit down with two groups of students, keen to tell us about their experiences, and armed with prepared notes.

The first group (Riley, Charlotte and Tom) participated in Bike Ed, an in-school program developed by Vicroads. They learnt skills such as road rules, road signs, confidence, safe riding, and the basic mechanics of a bicycle.

Charlotte explains: “I learnt how to give way, and what is a safe distance to keep from cars and the gutter. I feel so much more confident now.”

The program also supported parents to reinforce the lessons learnt at school by taking their children on bike rides.

The feedback from this program has been excellent. Christine glows with pride at their achievements: “The students have really grown in confidence. Before this program, Riley always used training wheels at home. Now he has the confidence to ride without them.”

In a further educational spin-off, the students rode bikes that were kept in tip-top shape by Kalianna students who specialise in bicycle maintenance.

The second group of students (Angelica and George) swapped the tough ironbarks of Bendigo for the lush forests of north eastern Victoria. With students from across the state, they tackled the challenge of riding 100km in two days along the Wangaratta to Bright rail trail. This experience was organised by the Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre.

The students trained by riding to Bendigo Botanic Gardens, and doing laps of the school oval. Though they have bicycles at home, it was the first time they had attempted riding such a long distance.

George says, "I learnt heaps about riding, especially about changing gears to get up hills, and riding in pairs. And I got a sore bum!"

But it wasn't all hard work. The students built new friendships over shopping trips, and camp activities like 'glow in the dark' mini-golf. Angelica recalled the calming effect of cycling: "Even though I hadn't ridden a bike much before this camp, it was really relaxing. It was so much fun."

Ms Goodes says that relaxation is an important reason for the bike program: "We find that so many of our students love being physical - it calms their anxiety. And bike riding is a great way of relaxing while also creating independence."

Narelle Lyle, Strong Communities Officer at the City of Greater Bendigo, compliments Kalianna on their program: "We love supporting schools to do extra-curricular activities. The benefits in terms of independence, health, and personal growth are obvious." Josh White, the teacher who applied for the grant, says, "Narelle was excellent to work with. It was a straightforward process, and she helped us adapt our project to match the guidelines."

Learning to ride a bike safely and confidently is an exhilarating experience, and so the last word must be left to a student in the program, who gave this feedback gem: "Thanks so much Ms Goodes. I had never ridden a bike before, and now I can!"