



26 February 2015. It is lovely to be here at Old Parliament House, this is a magnificent building, it is a shrine to the great men and women who built our democracy and whose legacy we extend and build on today just up the hill.

I'm here today to formally launch the 18th annual Pollie Pedal charity bike ride and it's a real thrill to be here with so many of my parliamentary colleagues who have been part of this Pollie Pedal bike ride over the previous 18 years. 18 years ago, one night, up on the hill, myself and a number of colleagues, Ross Cameron, Jackie Kelly, Andrew Southcott were asking ourselves what we could do to lift the standing of politicians.

In those days, politicians weren't very popular – but how things have changed – and we decided after much cogitation that the best thing we could do was a long-distance charity bike ride raising money for various good causes, staying in caravan parks because it would be a complete contrast to the usual way that politicians operate. We would get out of our suits, out of the white cars, out of our offices, out of our comfort zone – in effect – to do something that would help to remind the general public, the people of Australia, that we're human, that we have the same sorts of cares, the same sorts of concerns, the same sorts of aspirations as people generally and that's what the Pollie Pedal has been over the last 18 years.

For me and for many of my colleagues and increasingly a large group of friends as well, it's been an opportunity to do something for a good cause, and in the process, see parts of our country that are off the political beaten track and to meet people who don't normally get a chance to meet senior politicians.

So, this year – the 18th – we'll be riding from Burnie to Launceston. It's about 600 kilometres all up. We will be going through all sorts of small towns and villages. We will be meeting the people there in the seats of Braddon, of Lyons and Bass and it will be a good opportunity for them to talk about the things that are on their mind to senior members of the Government, to their local Members and it will also be an opportunity for us to experience something of the life of that beautiful part of Australia there in northern Tasmania.

It's a great thing to do; I've certainly enjoyed every second of it. It is also to raise serious money for very good causes. So far, over the 18 years, Pollie Pedal has raised some \$4.5 million. Some \$2 million has been raised for Carers Australia, who have been our beneficiary over the last three years and again this fourth year.

I want to pay tribute to Carers Australia; I want to pay tribute to the carers of Australia. Magnificent people who are an unpaid work force 24/7 for the people they love. The unseen pillars of our society are its carers. I've often said that it's not what we have to do but what we choose to do that is our measure. It's not what we do for money but what we do for love that is the true measure of our humanity and carers do so much for love. They choose to do so much for love and that's why it's been a real honour to ride for carers over the last few years and a real honour to get to know and become friends with Ara Creswell, the CEO of Carers Australia and Ara it's lovely to be with you this morning.,

Before handing over to Ara, I probably should just finally again pay tribute to all of my colleagues. I should pay a particular tribute today to Paul Hillbrick who built the bike that I'm now handing over to the Museum of Democracy here. I pay a particular tribute to Kevin Andrews who effectively led last year's Pollie Pedal when I was absent for most of it. I also want to pay a special tribute to Angus Taylor who's been the principal fundraiser for Pollie Pedal over the last year or so. Thanks, mate, really good to have all that commitment. And Stephen Hodge, one of Australia's most legendary cyclists who's been a prominent part of Pollie Pedal for most of the last 18 years, great to have you with us again this year Steve, well done.