

Media release



FROM THE MINISTER FOR SPORT AND RECREATION

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INSPIRING HANDCYCLE "LE TOUR" FINISHES AT DOCKLANDS

Participants in Wheelchair Sports Victoria's version of the Tour de France rode into Docklands today to a warm welcome from supporters including the Minister for Sport and Recreation, James Merlino, after a demanding 500 kilometre journey through eastern Victoria.

Mr Merlino said athletes had met with school children in 35 towns along the route of the 2007 Le Tour Handcycle from Orbost to Docklands to promote the Brumby Government's *Go for your life* campaign, which encourages people of all ages and abilities to be more physically active.

"As well as hand-peddalling a gruelling 500 kilometres, the athletes were fantastic ambassadors for our *Go for your life* campaign," Mr Merlino said.

"By talking about their life stories, these talented athletes raised awareness about how someone with a disability can achieve anything.

"Many young people with a disability can feel quite isolated, especially in rural areas, and these athletes, with their positive message and attitude make an impact wherever they go."

Mr Merlino said handcycling was a relatively new sport in Australia, but had fast become the sport of choice for physically disabled people, with the 2007 Le Tour Handcycle expected to create even more interest.

"Handcycling is a terrific way for people with a physical disability to enjoy outdoor activities and show the wider community what they can do," he said.

Mr Merlino said Wheelchair Sports Victoria (WSV) was also working with Cycle Sport Victoria to integrate handcycling into mainstream cycling activities in both social and competitive settings.

The Victorian Government contributed \$46,000 to Wheelchair Sports Victoria for Le Tour Handcycle through a '*Go for your life*' *Physical Activity Grants*

program and provided a further \$35,000 through a *State Sporting Association Support Grant*.

WSV plans to stage the 2008 Le Tour Handcycle from Corryong to Melbourne.