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# Women rallying together

After witnessing the record numbers of women competitors at the Globe Roamer III Imbil Rally, BRISPORT thought it a timely opportunity to highlight some of the women Imbil participants, as well as, in our opinion, Australia's most successful rally co-driver.



WOMEN IN RALLY

WOMEN IN RALLY



## Coral Taylor

As one of the most famous names in Australian rally, Coral Taylor needs no introduction to rally fans.

A four-time champion co-driver of the RSEA Safety Motorsport Australia Rally Championship, Taylor has been involved with the sport for more than 40 years, which has included competing in more than 150 rallies.

From claiming national titles in 1993, 1994, 1995 and 2008 alongside Neal Bates to spending a large portion of recent years as a team manager role for Toyota Gazoo Racing Australia, Taylor is quite an experienced individual.

First getting into rallying in 1979 alongside her father after spending her life savings on half a share of a Datsun 1600 and joining the Brisbane Sporting Car Club, Taylor fell in love with the sport from the very minute she sat in the car.

While her first major event was the 1979 Repco Reliability Trial, Taylor and her father, Norm Fritter, had contested a number of Queensland Rally Championship rounds before going on her adventure around Australia.

Unfortunately, the father-daughter duo didn't last long in the event, but it didn't deter her as she went on to have a long and prosperous career.

Co-driving for a number of talented drivers in the 1980s, Taylor's big break came when she joined Bates in the Toyota Celica in the early 1990s – a partnership that would lead to plenty of success, including 27 wins and four national championships.

Just like her father inspired her, Taylor was an inspiration to her daughter Molly, who went on to become an Australian champion in 2016 – continuing the legacy of the Taylor name.

For Taylor, it's been an unforgettable journey full of highlights.

"My dad was a rally driver, but as a child, I didn't really take much notice. It wasn't until I joked over dinner one night ahead of the 1979 Repco that I would go with him that the seed was planted," Taylor said.

"There have been so many highlights over the years. Going rallying with my dad (and discovering that he actually swore a lot), my first ARC win with Peter Glennie in 1986, winning the Alpine rally with Murray Coote in 1991, joining Neal Bates Motorsport and Toyota in 1993 and winning four Australian Championships and more recently winning this year's Rally Launceston with Harry Bates.

*"At the end of the day, sometimes the highlight is just going rallying, fullstop"*

"My favourite memory though was the 1993 Rally of Melbourne when Possum's crew lined the road and clapped as we drove past at a roadside service. It's still a very emotional memory for me, having the respect of our fiercest competitors was something very special.

"However, at the end of the day, sometimes the highlight is just going rallying, fullstop. I have been very lucky to be a part of the NBM team for a long time and that in itself is a highlight.

"It was also very special to have Molly follow in my footsteps, but just as nerve racking. I think she's overtaken me though. These days I'm usually introduced as "this is Coral, Molly Taylor's mum."



LARISSA BIGGAR LARISSA BIGGAR LARISSA BIGGAR



# Larissa Biggar

Larisa Biggar won her first QRC event last month and it was a result that was a long time in the making.

A regular co-driver in both the Queensland Rally Championship and the RSEA Safety Motorsport Australia Rally Championship, Biggar has a wealth of experience in the sport.

First getting involved in 1998, Biggar got her first taste of motorsport competing in motorkhanas before co-driving for fellow BSCC member in the 1998 Moby Vic's Rally based out of the servo at Beerburrum.

Although her first event saw the Escort she was in roll multiple times, she remained in love with the sport and continued getting gigs at both a club, state and national level.

Most of Biggar's success has come in recent years, where she has enjoyed

a number of podiums alongside the likes of Melinda Bergmann and her current driver in Ronnie Bustard.

Some of her highlights with Bergman included outright second in Imbil in 2018 and third outright in Manumbar the following year, while her stint with Bustard saw her claim a victory in the White Wolf Constructions ARC Production Cup in the Make Smoking History Forest Rally earlier this year.

Biggar's talents as a co-driver were highlighted during the 2018 QRC Border Ranges Rally in Kyogle when she was called the notes for two separate drivers with two different driving styles with the pace notes needing to be delivered in two different styles, all the while helping them achieve the results they were after.

PHOTO: ZED PHOTOGRAPHY

However, one can't look past her most recent achievement as she and Bustard enjoyed their the victory at Imbil – a result that took a lot of hard work and effort.

It wasn't just the result itself that put the Globe Runner III Imbil Rally as her favourite memory, but rather the huge field of women competing in the event.

"It was awesome to see if I am honest," Biggar said.

**“Winning a QRC was the sweetest. I cried for a week”**

"To properly introduce ourselves in a gathering like that was really special. There are so many amazing women in our sport.

"As for the result, it was so amazing to get that result. I've done loads of events and finished all of them on the podium but winning a QRC was the sweetest though. I cried for a week.

"I just love rallying because I get to be with my friends and rally family, as well

as pushing myself to the absolute limit and discovering what I can achieve.

"Those moments in a rally car with just you and your driver, it's a very special instance in time with a whole lot going on. The laughter and fun you have along the way is probably the best part.

"I like being in the ARC because of the really big, logistically complex events that require complete immersion. For five days the world stands still and I'm 100 per cent in rally mode.

"It also allowed me to discover my other rally family - we see the same competitors, core officials and teams of people running the show at each event. So, not unlike the QRC rally family or back when I was kid doing the Australian Motorkhana Championships.

"I remember doing motorkhanas at the start of my career. I was doing it for about five years and wanted to go faster, but I was a poor Uni student at the time. Luckily one of the members at the club needed a co-driver and I was encouraged to give it a go.

"With that said, I have always been a fan. As a kid watching the WRC on TV, I thought they were insane. How do they go so fast on dirt, and how do those co-drivers get all their words out and sound so calm. Such extreme car control and nerves of steel."



PHOTO: CH IMAGES



# Melinda Bergmann

Rallying has always been in Melinda Bergmann's blood.

From attending events as a toddler in the 1970s to getting in the car for the first time at a motorkhana at 12-years-old, Bergmann was destined to excel in the sport.

Her first experience in rally came as a co-driver in a Toyota Corolla, before getting the opportunity to compete as a driver in that same car at a gravel ralliesprint in 2003.

Following on from her official driving debut where she came away with a class win, Bergmann has built up a pool of highlights.

At the top of that list would be her second outright placing at the 2019 Imbil Rally, securing the highest finishing place for a female driver in the Queensland Rally Championship.

However, in the final round of that same year a tyre puncture put a quick end to that event and ultimately Bergmann's hopes for a QRC title win. One that she was aiming to better from the previous years' overall third place.

While she has enjoyed success on the gravel, she has achieved a lot on tarmac, including ten appearances in the prestigious Targa Tasmania - one of which was as a

factory driver for Mazda in 2007.

Fuelled by her passion for cars and rallying, Bergmann thrives on seeing young women enter the sport, making the field of more than 20 women at Imbil last month a special moment.

"I am so proud of Queensland's women and to be a part of such an extraordinary group," Bergmann said.

"At that event we had the winning co driver, a Queensland Rally Panel representative, a few first timers, our junior champion and the series sponsor among others.

"In Queensland, women are treated the same as guys and no one cares about your gender. As long as you're not a jerk, and you're having a crack, you are part of our community.

"For my own journey of motorsport, I have been hooked since my first hand brake turn at a motorkhana at age 12.

"Some motorkhana friends took me to spectate at the Moby Vics rally around the year 2000 and I was hooked. The drivers were absolute rock stars, the roar of carbies echoing in the forest, the plumes of dust, the skill required to make cars slide around corners - it all just blew me away and I had to get involved.

"In that time, there have been lots of small memories, like jumping my Evo IX over a left hand corner crest at speed, then using the momentum to flick the car into a tighter right hand corner on WRC spec roads at the Kyogle Rally and nailing a Scandinavian flick at a spectator point at Benarkin - a rally my parents once organised - where I knew they had come to watch me."

*"I have been hooked since my first hand brake turn at a motorkhana at age 12"*

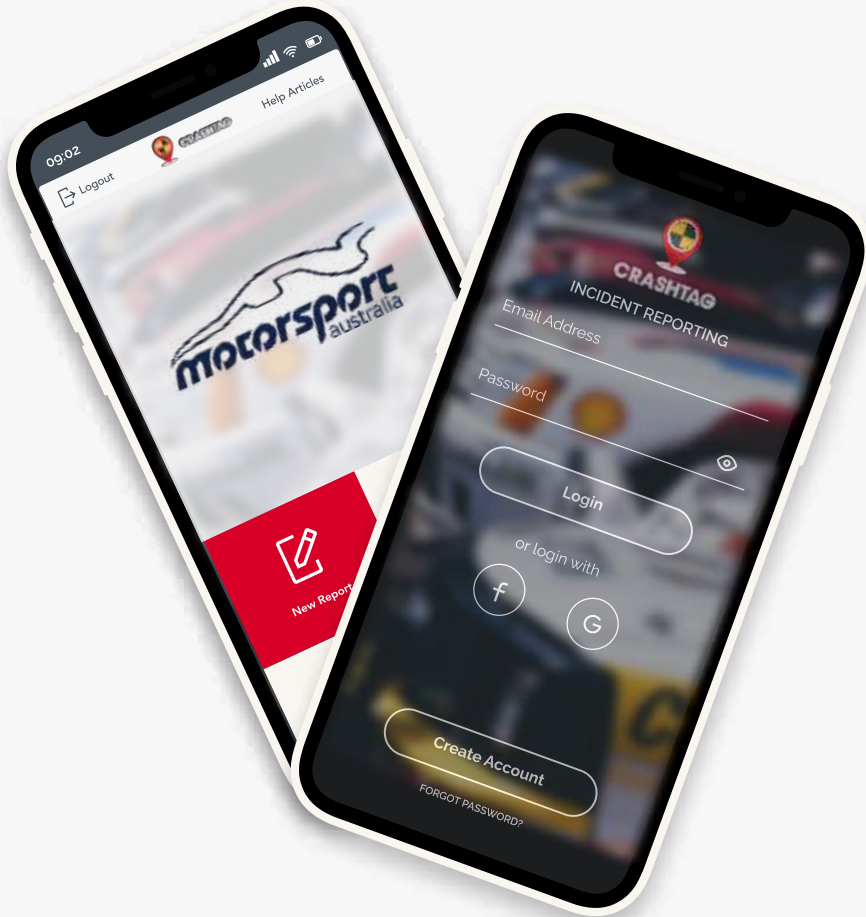


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# Kim Acworth

When Kim Acworth first encountered rally, it happened to be out of pure coincidence - stumbling across the FAI Rally of Canberra whilst on an impromptu road trip - little did she know it would have a long-lasting effect on her life.

Although it took her another nine years before she got her taste of the sport as a competitor, Acworth hasn't ever looked back since first navigating at the 2008 Mt Stuart Hill Climb in Townsville, where she and driver Stuart Titheradge finished second outright.

Acworth switched the passenger seat for the driver seat in 2009 and spent plenty of time building her craft at rally sprints before contesting her first rally at the KCF Benarkin in 2010.

It was a tough initiation for her with a flat tire on the very first stage, but she still finished and the motivation to continue only grew stronger.

Over the years, Acworth has improved significantly and has enjoyed a number of successful results, her best year being in 2015, which saw her place fifth overall in the Queensland Rally Championship.

Some of her highlights that year included first outright in the Invitational Classics class of the 2015 Coates Hire WRC and second in the P3 Solutions Rally Benarkin.

Since making her debut, Acworth has become a mainstay of the Queensland

Rally Championship - showcasing her passion for the sport by sponsoring and supporting the QRC itself.

For Acworth, who is a big believer in women competing in motorsport, it was an easy decision to support the QRC.

"There are many reasons as to why I backed the QRC, but most of all, it's because I love the sport and the people involved. Anyone from competitors and officials to car clubs and volunteers," Acworth said.

"I also saw it as a win-win opportunity. I found out they didn't have a sponsor six weeks out from the first event and I felt like it was good marketing for my business which contributed to the sport I love.

"I also think that I am very likely to be the first female business owner to sponsor the QRC, and although I can't be sure, I think it is kind of cool.

"I think women looking to get into the sport should just start somewhere. The rally community is so supportive.

"When I started 15 years ago I knew absolutely nothing about the sport, but I have learned so much and have felt so supported.

"Just getting in and rallying is so empowering and fun.

"Rally has a lot of tough times and you have to be resilient to push through, but there are plenty of highs and that's why I love the sport."



# Alex Cherry

Alex Cherry may not have been a fan of rallying her whole life but was certainly hooked on it when she started following it as a fan almost a decade ago.

Going to rallies alongside her family, Cherry loved to sit in the picturesque forests of Queensland for hours and watch the cars go by – a passion that has always remained inside her.

However, it wasn't until her stepdad purchased a Holden Gemini for her in 2018 to drive to her formal that she decided to take the giant step into the world of rallying as a competitor and truly fell in love with the sport.

Since making her debut as a co-driver just two years ago in Benarkin, she has managed to pick up some good rewards for her hard work, including placing second in the 2020 Novice Rally Series' co-driver standings and winning the 2021 Queensland Junior Rally Championship.

In 2022, she was the highest placed junior co-driver in the Globe Roamer III Imbil Rally, further highlighting her progress through the sport.

Despite claiming a number of good results over the last couple of years, her biggest achievement was being the highest ranked junior co-driver in the state component of last year's Accent Benchtops Rally Queensland.

Her maiden appearance at an event also hosting the RSEA Safety Motorsport

Australia Rally Championship also stands as one of the biggest highlights of a career that is on the rise.

"I had been going to rallies with my family for years and when my step dad bought and built a Holden Gemini to drive me to my formal in, we decided to enter our first rally as a course car before entering an event competitively a year later," Cherry said.

"My favourite memory so far is our first rally back after what was my toughest memory of being in a big crash at Imbil 2021 where we rolled our car and landed on the roof."

PHOTO: CH IMAGES

"I was nervous getting back in the car, but we did it and I was so proud of both getting back into it and finishing the event in the same pair of undies we started in.

"While that was my favourite memory, my biggest highlight

was definitely competing in the QRC at Gympie as it was an awesome event. It was also awesome to be competing in the same event as Molly Taylor.

"An overall highlight has been racing in a team with my stepdad and I'm honoured he trusts me to tell him any form of direction.

"As a woman who has only recently joined the sport, I would tell other girls thinking about getting into it, that some of the best drivers and co-drivers I've seen have been women. If you're thinking of giving rally ago, do it, women are so capable of going out and kicking some ass in the forest and it's truly such a fun time."

*"Women are so capable of going out and kicking some ass in the forest"*

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# Nikki Duclos

Unlike many others in rallying, Nikki Duclos doesn't have a motorsport background or a family who encouraged her to join – it was a journey that began off the back of an unfortunate incident.

Passionate about the outdoors, Duclos was severely injured after a wakeboarding incident and was forced to spend a long time recovering and away from the things she loved.

However, an opportunity to purchase a cheap paddock-basher came about and gave her the chance to get her speed fix – a move that paved the way for a journey into rallying.

Starting with khanacrosses, an instantly popular Duclos hit the ground running and enjoyed success right from the get-go – a run of form that would see encouraged by fellow competitors to try rallying.

That was all the motivation she needed and with a supportive partner who helped build the car, Duclos was soon gearing up for her first event – the RSEA Safety Motorsport Australia Rally Championship's Accent Benchtops Rally Queensland in Gympie.

Unfortunately, multiple issues caused her car to falter, however with the support of ARC regulars such as Andrew Penny, Duclos was able to get up and running, her talent helping her secure a finish in her Motorsport Australia Queensland Rally Championship debut.

It was a moment that would unleash a love for rallying and inspiration to stay on the path.

Duclos continued to improve and produce good results in the QRC, including a season-high class podium at the 2021 KCF Winter stages in Benarkin, as well as finishing 13th on the overall standings.

While it's been a short career so far, it's one that has given Duclos a new lease on life and her passion to keep competing is stronger than ever.

"I grow up not knowing anything about rally but the minute my team crossed the line of the final stage at my first event, I was hooked," Duclos said.

"The adrenaline rush of what we had just done was amazing and I wanted to chase that feeling again. I became determined to improve and see how far I could go in this sport.

"Our first event was such a crazy ride of emotions, but we made some great new friends and learnt a lot. When we crossed the line at the end, it was all worth it and I was so proud of us for finishing it in its entirety.

"A second place in my category as well as an outright 13th was just something I never expected and was absolutely elated when they called our names at the presentation.

"I was so happy I was able to have success at the event, not just because it proved that I could actually do this, but for my team who always believed I could. It was the best reward I could have given them outside of the class win.

"Being very inexperienced makes competing in the QRC a huge feat in itself. My partner literally helped turn my stock car into a rally-ready car in only three months, which I am so thankful and proud beyond words of him.

"It would be great to see more women getting out there and having a go. I don't think they should be scared. Simply joining a club and meet like-minded people will be a major boost.

"Women coming into the sport should also consider being the change they want to see. Even though it can be hard being a girl in what is considered a male-dominated sport, it starts with us and we should really try and encourage more women.

"I have met some amazing women doing this who share this sentiment and I hope we can continue to change the culture together."







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# McCarthy grabs career-first WRC point in NZ

**Brisbane Sporting Car Club member and prominent co-driver John McCarthy picked up his first ever World Rally Championship (WRC) point last month as he and regular RSEA Safety Motorsport Australia Rally Championship (ARC) driver Harry Bates finished 10th at Rally New Zealand.**

Behind the wheel of a Skoda Fabia Evo 2 R5, Bates and McCarthy enjoyed two stage wins in the WRC2 class across the weekend, in what was a positive WRC debut for the Australian pairing together. The current ARC leaders ended the rally fourth in class.

Thursday's Shakedown and opening Super Special Stage was the first occasion Bates and McCarthy could set a benchmark

alongside their WRC2 counterparts, finishing merely seconds behind eventual rally winner Hayden Paddon and Supercars star Shane van Gisbergen.

Friday's group of stages saw a couple of hiccups for the ARC leaders early, with a rear right puncture resulting in a significant amount of time lost – ultimately finishing the day almost three minutes behind WRC2 leader Paddon.

Six stages were held on the Saturday, with the opening stage also proving difficult as Bates narrowly avoided a telegraph pole after sliding wide on a corner.

Their moment midway through the day proved a turning point, as Bates consistently placed in the top three throughout the middle stages before eventually going fastest for WRC2 on SS11.

Some positive performances followed again on Sunday, including victory in the second Whitford Forest run, meant Bates would hold on to fourth in the WRC2 overall standings and tenth across the WRC proper.

Bates and McCarthy have since returned to Australia and will continue their charge for a second consecutive ARC title with the Adelaide Hills Rally in South Australia on 21-23 October.





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