



**Biker chick:** Donna Hansen will ride a Harley-Davidson along the west coast of the US to raise money for breast cancer research.

Picture: Scott McNaughton

## Donna's big ride to aid cancer charities

By **Christine Kellett**

WHEN Donna Hansen pulls on her helmet in California next month, she knows there is a lot more riding on her trip than just a bit of fun in the sun.

As a breast cancer survivor, the 46-year-old postie from Werribee feels a responsibility to prove to other women struck down by the disease that life can return to normal.

Ms Hansen is one of 20 survivors from Australia and the USA who will ride Harley-Davidson motorbikes along the west coast of the United States to raise money for breast cancer charities.

Held during international Breast Cancer Awareness Week, the trip, dubbed Changing Gears, begins in San Diego on October 1 and finishes eight days later in San Francisco. It aims to highlight the plight of sufferers around the world.

Ms Hansen was diagnosed five years ago and underwent three operations, including a full mastectomy. She will keep up her daily oral chemotherapy treatment during the trip.

She was the only Victorian selected to take part, and will call on her many years' experience on the back of a motorbike to complete the journey.

"As a postie I ride my bike pretty much everyday, and I also have one of my own," she told the *Banner* last week.

"With my love for bikes, the outdoors and my compassion for other women, I see this as the opportunity of a lifetime."

Reading about Changing Gears — a spin-off of a similar event held in Australia in 1996 — on the internet earlier this year, Ms Hansen was encouraged to enter by friends.

"When I found out I'd been selected, I was just so overwhelmed. I've never ridden a Harley before, so I'm a little nervous about that, but it is very exciting, and something I might never get the chance to experience again.

"To take part in an event like this to help other breast cancer sufferers with other women that have been there, the opportunity to see some of America, and to spread the word that life does go on, would be something great to come out of the struggle over the past five years."

Of the 20 riders to take part, five are from Australia.

Ms Hansen will meet up with other riders from Queensland and New South Wales in Sydney before they head to the US.

Ms Hansen said the Aussie contingent had set a fund-raising target of about \$5000 each.

"We'll be more than happy with whatever we can get, though," she said.

To sponsor Ms Hansen, visit [www.changinggears.org](http://www.changinggears.org), or call the *Banner* on 9731 2777.



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