Meet the man riding for charity, and son's memory

BY **EMILY MIDDLETON**

Fraser's Friends - Bill Wearn, Stephen Roe, Reon Holmes, Pete MacSmith, and Nigel Harding. Picture supplied.

MORE than 13 years ago, Bill Wearn lost his son Fraser to a tragic farm accident, when he was just 10-years-old.

Today, Mr Wearn is cycling in his 10th Royal Far West charity Ride for Country Kids, to raise money for the community that was able to get him back on his feet.

"It started 10 years ago when I found myself in a situation needing some fitness and mental health or wellbeing support," he said.

"That's how my little group at Royal Far West came to be called Fraser's Friends."

The three-day, 380 kilometre ride through the far west regions of NSW kicks off today, May 15, with the event aiming to raise awareness and funds for the Royal Far West.

Participants will ride from Bourke through to Cobar, Nyngan and Narromine.

Mr Wearn will be riding alongside his brothers Rob and Adrian, as well as a group of friends and family who have been fundraising under the name Fraser's Friends.

While his support network is strong, it is the staff at Royal Far West and their commitment to their community that has kept Mr Wearn coming back each year.

"I could see the commitment and life values in so many of the staff that I was fortunate to meet," Mr Wearn said.

"The charity ride goes back to connecting the staff and the families who have children involved in it ... we all connect and feed off each other to make things a bit better."

Throughout the ride, participants will have the opportunity to visit schools and communities that have been supported by Royal Far West during the past 100 years.

Being able to see the people his fundraising efforts are supporting first-hand has always been one of Mr Wearn's favourite parts of the event.

"With so many familiar faces and to be able to stay connected with an organisation such as Royal Far West, and seeing the long-term impact - they are more than employees," he said.

"There are a lot of them where this is their entire life, and I find that an amazing thing."

Even before the tragic accident 13 years ago, Mr Wearn's connection to the Australian charity stemmed back to his grandparents, Walter and Polly Wearn, who were involved in the beginning stages of the then-known Far West Children charity.

"My grandmother Polly wrote a book, *The Magic Shoulder,* which is very much a part of the early years of the Far West Children," Mr Wearn said. "She was a nurse, and my grandfather was an honorary dentist."

His grandparents witnessed from the beginning the dedication and involvement of Royal Far West's founder, Reverend Stanley Drummond. Mr Wearn puts his grandparent's dedication to the charity down to the incredible commitment they watched first-hand from Reverend Drummond.

Mr Wearn said he was proud to see how many people were committed to the cause, and was looking forward to seeing how much money Royal Far West was able to raise this year.