



Hi Team,

As a person living with multiple sclerosis AND a fellow rider, I want to thank you for taking part in the MS Gong Ride to **fight MS**.

My name is Kate, and I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in March 2018. Until my diagnosis, I was a regular 29 year old.

I worked full-time, made the most of every weekend, travelled and played soccer. In fact, my partner and I were planning a big move to live in France!

Then my world turned upside down.

I was travelling in Mexico and started to experience some very strange symptoms. After going for a swim in a chilly alpine pool, I just couldn't get sensation back in my feet. I put on several pairs of socks, but by the morning a tingling and numb sensation had spread up to my waist.

When I got home to Australia, my GP suggested I see a neurologist if my symptoms didn't improve. I was put on a 4 month waiting list.

For those 4 months I simply kept living my life back in Sydney - with soccer, work, and a week-long hiking trip in Tasmania with my closest friends to distract me, I put it at the back of my mind. In the meantime, *I'd also started to notice when I exercised my vision would go blurry.*

My 30th came along and I celebrated in blissful ignorance with dinners, parties, and weekends away. I'd had what I can objectively describe as the best year of my life so far. MS was the furthest thing from my mind.

Then, 3 weeks after my 30th birthday, I finally received the results from my neurologist.

In the space of weeks, the best year of my life so far became the worst...



(That's me in Tasmania, right before everything changed.)

As I sat in the neurologists office, I was taken aback when he told me I had lesions on my brain and spinal cord.

I had MS.

I was totally shocked. I knew nothing about MS. I had so many questions...

What does this mean? How did I get it? Why me, why now? Is it life threatening? Will I be able to have children? Will I be able to move to France?

In the year following my diagnosis, I relapsed every couple of months, each time with new and scary symptoms. At some points, I had no vision, numbness in my face and mouth which affected my taste and made me drool, difficulty walking, shooting pains in my limbs and crippling fatigue.

I had an overwhelming sense that this was going to get worse, not better.

I started on a disease modifying treatment, but that came with its own set of symptoms and issues.

Determined not to let this disease get the better of me, I signed up for the MS Gong Ride in 2018.

The ride gave me something to aim for, and fundraising for this provided an outlet for me to deal with the injustice of what was happening to me.

It was tough, but I crossed the line after those 82km with tears of relief that in spite of everything, I could, at least, still ride a bike.



I've started to get a lot of my life back in the past couple of months since starting a new treatment - going to the gym again, socialising more often, working full-time, organising holidays. And best of all, we're planning a wedding next year, in France.

My only symptoms now are tingling feet and legs at times, and fatigue almost all the time.

But, I never know what's around the corner. I take things day by day, and am thankful for the fact that I can still get on a bike and ride.

And I can't wait to ride again with you this year. Riding last year lifted my spirits, and gave me power back over my body which was failing me daily.



And I'm ready to smash it again! 🦊

It's not an easy ride, but as we take it on together, please know how much your support means to people living with MS.

MS strikes young people in the prime of their lives. It's a lifelong diagnosis, and absolutely terrifying.

I can't tell you how much your support means so much to so many people, especially me.

Thank you for riding to **fight MS.**

Kate

Kate Sharkey

Living with MS