

READY TO RACE: Wagga deputy mayor Yvonne Braid (middle) and sponsor Neil Pinto (third from right) welcomed New Zealand's representatives to Wagga yesterday for the weekend's Waga two-day cycling tour. Cyclists gearing up for the big event were Anton O'Connell, 15, of NZ, Victoria Makin 13, of Wagga, Nick Kergezou De Laboessier, 16, of NZ, Saxon Hodges, 14, of Wagga, Greg Westerman, 14, of Wagga and Libby Bayne, 15, of NZ. Picture: Oscar Colman



Kiwi invaders to take on region's best cyclists

CYCLING

by Matt Malone

THREE New Zealand cyclists will set out to put Riverina's best to the test when Wagga's junior two-day cycling tour begins today.

Competitors from under nines right up until the 17 years division will compete today and tomorrow in our races all revolved around the township of Wantabadgery.

Wagga orthodontist and keen cycling enthusiast Neil Pinto has for years sponsored New Zealand-

based cyclists to travel across to Australia for the event.

Last year the Kiwis featured strongly and Pinto expects New Zealand trio Anton O'Connell, Nick Kergezou De Laboessier and Libby Bayne to again be right in the mix of competition.

"I think they'll go fairly well," Pinto said yesterday.

"The riders coming across are starting to gain a little bit more status. Last year they won medals and two of them should be right up in the placings again this year."

Leading the local charge will be

Greg Westerman, along with Saxon Hodges, Victoria Makin, Beth Rees, Jake Brooker and Chris Powell.

The races kick off at 10am today and will continue from 8.30am tomorrow.

The four-race series consists of a time trial and three road races.

As part of the sponsorship exchange program, some lucky Wagga cyclists also get the chance to race in New Zealand in October.

The program has been running for four years but only one Wagga cyclist has travelled to New Zealand.

Pinto said the program provides a great experience for the young cyclists.

"It's a great experience," Pinto said.

"In the past we've had kids of the ilk of the Scotts and they tend to go on their own with the NSW Institute of Sport and things like that.

"This is about the next level development and trying to give the experience kids who don't have the opportunity to go overseas and race as a group and experience the opportunities like that."

Wade leaves Haddin's role up in the air

gloveman last week despite Matthew Wade's solid job filling in for the 34-year-old during the tour of the Caribbean.

But it appears Wade shouldn't give up hope of winning a selection battle with Haddin, particularly after his maiden Test hundred during this week's clash with the West Indies in Dominica.

"Wadey stood up brilliantly and I'm just so happy because it's creating depth for us in so many positions," coach and selector Mickey Arthur said.

"There is a lot of water to go under the bridge before our next Test match against South Africa at the Gabba. That situation will unfold.

"Wadey will be in England with

us in the one-day squad. He'll be in Sri Lanka against Pakistan with us and he'll be in the Twenty20 World Cup.

"So he's going to have ample opportunity to really shine and really show us what he's got and I think Hadds will probably have two Shield games before we have to go out and pick the team for that first Test.

"For us to comment now is probably too early. I just think will all unfold in the wash."

While Arthur doesn't yet know how the wicketkeeping position debate will play out, what he is certain of is how the team have developed through a Caribbean tour against a resilient and competitive Wind outfit.