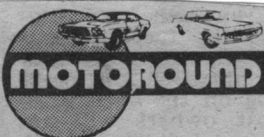


# The Courier

BALLARAT

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## Getting ready for Begonia rally

Engines are being tuned, wheels chosen and maps checked as the motor sport world prepares for the premier motoring event in Ballarat — the 1981 Begonia rally.

Billed as one of the most exciting events in the 1981 rally calendar, the two-day all daylight rally will be run in conjunction with Ballarat's successful Begonia Festival.

Organisers are working to make it the most successful Begonia rally yet, despite the fact that the rally failed to win the nomination as the Victorian round of the Australian Rally Championship.

Few details are available as to why the strong submission made on behalf of the Begonia was rejected. But the powers-at-be decided to stick with the Akademos — a night rally in Gippsland.

Possibly as a conciliatory measure, the Begonia has been given the status of a 'Special Event' and will be contested as the second round of the Victorian rally championship.

Entries have begun to come in from drivers from Western Australia, NSW and South Australia.

By Graeme Shandley

The publicity officer for the event, Mr Bruce Campbell said national rally champion Ross Dunkerton was interested in taking part.

"If he starts he will lead away a field of many nationally known drivers," Mr Campbell said.

A Lydiard street windscreen replacement firm has backed the rally this year and the event will be officially known as the Windscreens O'Brien Begonia Rally.

In keeping with the recent history of the 26 years the rally has been staged, the 1981 Begonia will be run only in daylight.

The field will be limited to 60 with the first cars heading out of central Ballarat at 11 am on February 28. The first of 36 special stages is only minutes later over a dirt and bitumen course in Victoria Park. Fourteen special stages will follow a route in the forests north-east of Ballarat.

The Sunday events will be run south of Ballarat through forest and over private land, including ford crossings, 'yumps' and gravel quarries.

By the time the cars get back to Ballarat on Sunday night, they will have covered 550 kms

with 300 of them on special stages.

Hundreds of spectators are expected to flood into Ballarat as well as dozens of crew members and families following each car.

The Begonia is renowned for the numbers of good spectator vantage points and a map will be available for those not sure of all the spots.

The Begonia is organised by the Ballarat branch of the Light Car Club of Australia and directed by leading Victorian rally men, Ross Runnalls and Geoff Boyd.