

It's been a great start to Targa Tasmania, Australia's ultimate tarmac rally, for Rhianon Smyth and Rick Bates. Bates was impressive behind the wheel of his Mazda3 MPS, setting some quick stage times on the opening day of the event.

“So far the event’s been pretty good,” Bates said. “We’re cruising and looking after the tyres.”

“The car is going really well – yesterday (during the Prologue) the engine wasn’t pulling as well as it should, but the team worked on it overnight and it’s great today.”

The pair have finished Day 1 leading their class, and have a nine second lead over former World Rally Championship driver, Alister McRae.

Day 1 Showroom 2WD Results

- 1 Rick Bates, Rhianon Smyth,(NSW) +1.09
- 2 Alister McRae, Iain Stewart (WA) +1.18
- 3 Simon Evans, Sue Evans, (VIC) +2.01