

A promising start to Kennards Hire Rally Australia has ended in disappointment for Brendan Reeves and Rhianon Gelsomino after a blown exhaust gasket melted some steering components and forced their early retirement from day one of the event.

At the final round of the 2016 World Rally Championship (WRC), Reeves was keen to produce a good result in his Subaru WRX and started the day solidly. He was the fastest Australian in five of the day's first six stages and held a lead of 32 seconds over fellow countryman Harry Bates going into the mid-day service.

Unfortunately on the first test of the afternoon, the blown exhaust gasket ended their day.

Despite temperatures around 30C and thick dust, Reeves was enjoying the stages and was happy with the times he was recording until the mechanical issues struck. His Pirelli tyres worked well in the heat and his strong times, particularly in the long Newry stage, had him placed as high as 13th overall.

Reeves and his team have worked hard to get to the event and, not to be deterred, will re-start tomorrow under Rally 2 rules*. The service crew had three hours after the end of the day's competition to repair the car and are confident they have made the necessary repairs.

Kennards Hire Rally Australia continues tomorrow (Saturday) with seven stages, including two runs of the mammoth 50.80 kilometre Nambucca stage, and two runs of the Super Special Stage at Coffs Harbour Jetty.

The rally action will conclude on Sunday afternoon after another day of gruelling rallying.

*Rally 2 is a set of regulations that allow a driver who retires from an event to re-enter the next day at the cost of a five-minute time penalty.