

Angel Flight Australia

Mike Roselt is an enthusiastic volunteer for an unusual welfare program, Angel Flight. He didn't need much encouragement to tell us about it.

The day was fine (I could not say dawned fine as I wasn't awake to see it) for my ninth angel flight. This was a relief as my licence is day VFR. I was scheduled to fly a patient from Toowoomba to Cunnamulla in South West Queensland after he'd received treatment for cancer at the Toowoomba base hospital. The 42 year old chap had already driven to and from Toowoomba for tests and initial treatment several times. Being a 1330 km round trip by road this was becoming too difficult and uncomfortable for him especially following chemotherapy treatment on a fortnightly basis. It also meant he was away from his family for extended periods. His Doctor requested assistance from Angel Flight and from then flights were arranged on a regular basis. This was his fifth angel flight.

Like most flights this one had started about a week earlier when the mission was posted on the Angel Flight web site. The flights to and from Cunnamulla were also emailed for pilots to apply for. I applied for the return flight then

Seven year old twin boys Mitchell and Alister from Thargomindah Old with 14 angel flights between them



waited for the Angel Flight staff in Brisbane to review and allocate the flight. This is managed mainly on the basis of which pilot of those who applied is best located for the flight. When advised by Angel Flight that I was allocated this mission I proceeded to get everything ready for the flight in advance including doing the chart work, paperwork and GPS route set ups. I also spent time going over my Glasair VH-FLO (you know what it's like).



Tiger (red cap) with earth angel Graham and pilot Shaun (in middle) - 6 angel flights for Tiger from Cootamundra NSW to Sydney

So on the day I was as ready as I could be. I just needed to download the weather and submit flight plans before departing for Toowoomba. An objective in conducting these flights is to transport the patient with minimum fuss, hence the need to ensure the 6 p's are in place. I reckon most pilots will know them well! Prior planning helps prevents p...s poor performance! A great aspect of the angel flight pilot community is that on most occasions if a VFR pilot has to cancel due to weather then an IFR pilot will step up to the mark. We try to make that decision at the latest on the day prior to the scheduled flight.



Narelle - to date, 36 angel flights from Portland Vic to Melbourne!

Being based in Stanthorpe on the Granite Belt in Queensland I was 30 minutes flying time from Toowoomba where the flight

was scheduled to leave at 2 pm on 6 August 2009. It was an uneventful run up to Toowoomba with time to admire the scenery of the Darling Downs (despite the drought) and the Great Dividing Range to the east. On arrival I topped up the fuel tanks checked fuel usage and oil and waited for the earth angel and patient to arrive. I had spoken to both the patient and the earth angel lady over the preceding days covering off anything we needed to discuss to ensure a smooth departure. Earth angel volunteers do a fabulous job and are an integral part of the Angel Flight service. They pick up patients from their homes or hospitals and transport them to the airfields. They also organise a lot of events in support of the charity. On this particular mission the earth angel in Toowoomba had arranged for the local ABC radio station to interview all three of us as part of the effort to raise the profile of Angel Flight in the community. Great stuff and as I've experienced on other flights the patients are always amazing with how positive they are with their lot in life.



Timothy - 4 angel flights from Narrabri NSW to Sydney. Saddy Timothy has since passed away.

We departed Toowoomba on time and having got a clearance through Oakey airspace tracked 248 degrees for St George in the south west of Queensland then for Cunnamulla further west on 259 degrees. I had planned the flight as an IFR flight (I follow roads) tracking the Moonie Highway then the Balonne Highway. Good weather all the way and we had a great chat once established in cruise at 8500 ft. We landed



Kayla with pilot Scott - to date, 389 angel flights from Crumchilla Qld to Brisbane.

at 4:12 pm after a 2hours 12 minutes flight covering 337 nm. From the patient's perspective this beats the hell out of a gruelling 8 to 9 hours drive!

On arriving at Cunnamulla I felt rewarded and moved to see the chap's eight year old twin boys and their mum waiting to greet him at the airfield. The boys so much wanted Dad to take them off to footy practice and that's just what they did. I could not imagine him being able to do so if he had driven home. Once everyone had left I remembered to cancel my sartime (yes!) and contacted the local council chap to arrange fuel. That all done I put FLO to bed for the night as it was too late to start the return flight. The closest airport was St George around a one hour flight east which would be pushing last light and it gets pretty black out west. I much prefer to fly for pleasure than pain!



Kayla with Bill Bristolow, Angel Flight founder and Chairman

Next morning instead of flying home to Stanthorpe I planned to fly into Archerfield to do my BFR at 11AM. So I flew direct St George, then Warwick and then into Archerfield arriving in plenty of time for a spell before starting the check flight. That completed it was time to head for home and a good night's sleep following a very rewarding couple of days flying.

This was my ninth angel flight. Other flights have taken me to places such as Theodore, Yowah, Eulo, Kingaroy, Inverell and Surat. Round trips have varied from 985 nm to 290 nm with the average being 630 nm. The small outback towns are particularly appreciative and many of the town folk know that the incoming flight is an angel flight and you are made very welcome. I find that doing angel flights is one of the most rewarding ways to fly and from other pilots reports on the Angel Flight web site it would seem that this is a very common experience.

Just a few facts about Angel Flight:

- Angel Flight was founded in Australia in April 2003
- Flights are for non-emergency patients who need medical treatment at major centres where other forms of transport are physically or emotionally taxing or are unaffordable by the patients
- No medical facilities or pilot assistance are expected during the flights
- Flights may be long or short depending on the particular mission
- To date over 8800 flights have been conducted benefiting over 1800 rural patients
- Over 2000 health professionals are registered to refer their patients to Angel Flight
- There are over 2200 pilots and 3300 earth angels registered to help perform the charity service
- Angel Flight is now organising 120 to 150 flights across Australia every month
- The flights are at no cost to the patients
- Angel Flight receives no funding from governments but depends on the generosity of the community for the funds required to do this great work

- It is an exceptional charity in that Angel Flight does not have a fund raising department and spends only 15% of funds on administrative overheads such as rent and telephones. Eighty five percent of revenue is spent on the actual coordination and delivery of the service. When I first started helping out we were subsidised to 50% of our fuel but the good news is now funds allow for a 100% subsidy
- Angel flights help provide people in rural Australia with the same opportunity as city folk to receive medical treatment in major hospitals which is what its all about
- From a pilots perspective to participate we are required to have a minimum of 250 pilot in command hours and naturally a current medical and pilots licence. Our aircraft are also required to have a minimum \$2 M liability insurance coverage which is fairly standard anyway.

Despite the numbers of registered pilots and earth angels more are needed as the number of flights continues to increase. This is especially so in NSW where more



Mike (AF cop) receiving a donation from the President of the Surfers Paradise Rotary Club at Coolangubra

pilots are needed across the state and to cover the Sydney area. Anyone who is interested to participate in the capacity of pilot, health professional or earth angel can visit the web site www.angelflight.org.au and follow the links to their area of interest. There are on line forms for registration for each category. If this type of charity work appeals to you in any capacity please take up the challenge and contact Angel Flight. You can contact Terry McGowan Operations Manager on 07 36208300 for

further information. The web site will also let you get acquainted with Angel Flight, pilots, earth angels and some of the many stories of the flights.

Happy flying,

Mike

Angel Flight would make a good charity for Chapters to support with some unexpended Chapter funds that might be lying around unused or as a fundraiser at your next Chapter event

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