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Schofields hosts Angel Flight

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On the eve of its seventh birthday, charity organisation Angel Flight Australia has selected Schofields Flying Club as its new Sydney base.

Angel Flight co-ordinates non-emergency flights to assist people in rural Australia in dealing with bad health, poor finances and daunting distances and in 2009 the charity conducted over 2200 flights. The charity had previously been using Bankstown Airport's main terminal as their meeting point in Sydney for volunteer pilots and patients, but this proved unsuitable particularly for operations outside of office hours.

Angel Flight Australia Director and Operations Manager Terry McGowan told Australian Flying the new partnership with Schofields provides all the requirements for Angel Flight operations.

"The facilities they provide to us are amazing," McGowan said. "It's a great benefit to the patients – they've got the comfort of an airconditioned place and they've got the tea/coffee and toilet facilities. Also, from the pilot's perspective having the access to the system at Schofields allows them to plan their flights.

"We have a number of volunteers that have come to us and said this is just an amazing situation we've now got going there. It's just a perfect arrangement; the access to the place is perfect to pick up and drop off patients. We're looking forward to being around for a long time and if we can keep working with Schofields we'll most certainly do that."

While nearly half of all flights that Angel Flight conducts are within NSW and predominantly into and out of Sydney, the charity actually has more volunteer pilots in both Victoria and Queensland.

"It's a little bit of a problem for us in a way because we just don't have the pilots for the patients and it can create a situation where sometimes we have to look at putting a patient on a commercial flight just to ensure that we get the patient to the treatment they need," McGowan explained. "From the point of view of pilots we're always after more, especially in NSW."

Anyone wishing to sign up as a volunteer Angel Flight pilot can do so via www.angelflight.org.au. Volunteer pilots – some of whom rent aircraft for the job if they don't own their own – have to have a minimum of 250 pilot in command hours under their belt, and Angel Flight pays for all fuel used during its flights.

Justin Grey



Angel Flight founder Bill Bristow with Kayla Graham, who Angel Flight has to date flown on 287 occasions.