

Reunited by angels of mercy

By JOHN BRIGGS

THE angels have been smiling on John Tait this week.

The chronically ill Bothwell man, believing he had only a few days to live, wanted to see his daughter Phoebe one last time.

But the eight-year-old from the Gold Coast was far away and neither Mr Tait or Phoebe's mother, Kay Webb, had the money to get the child to Hobart.

In stepped a little-known charity, Angel Flight, which is a group of volunteer pilots, and others connected to the airline industry.

The organisation made the decision to get Phoebe to Hobart as quickly as possible to see her father.

It resulted in flights in light aircraft from Coolangatta to Bankstown and then to Moorabbin and Hobart.

The total flying time was about nine hours and included an overnight stay at the home of a Victorian pilot on Saturday.

Yesterday, Phoebe was proving to be a little miracle worker and Mr Tait was feeling slightly better and hoping to leave the Royal Hobart Hospital's Whittle Ward to be cared for at home by his father Stewart.

Mr Tait has severe diabetes, renal failure, and has had three heart attacks and three aorta valve transplants.

But he was defying the odds yesterday and said seeing Phoebe for what may be the last time has cheered him.

"She has put a sparkle into my life and I love her dearly," he said as the little girl hugged him.

Phoebe, a bright and beautiful child with a million riddles and jokes, kept her father smiling.

Stewart Tait said John had improved so much he was hoping to take him home to Bothwell, where he has his own dialysis machine.

"John knows he may have a day, a week or a year to live and it's great to see him smiling again and we can't thank the Angel Flight people enough," he said.



TOGETHER: John Tait gets a big hug from daughter Phoebe at the Royal Hobart Hospital's Whittle Ward yesterday. Picture: TONY PALMER.

Mrs Webb endorsed the remarks, saying it had been a generous gesture by the people from Angel Flight, who had provide the time, fuel and money to get Phoebe and her to Hobart.

Angel Flight general manager David Courtney said the organi-

sation was more than happy to reunite the pair.

"Pilots have an itch to fly and they are going to fly anyway – there's a lot of them out there happy to help," Mr Courtney said.

Phoebe, who was pretty sick herself on the flight from

Bankstown to Moorabbin, has proved to be the best medicine for her father.

"It's school holidays in Queensland, so I can stay until Friday – do you know any elephant jokes?" she asked her father and anyone else willing to listen.