



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **ANGEL FLIGHT IN AUSTRALIA**

#### ***Creation of Angel Flight in Australia***



Angel Flight, launched as an Australian charity in April 2003, is the initiative of Bill Bristow AM a successful businessman, experienced pilot and very proud winner of the Australian of the Year Award - Queensland 2005.

In 2009, Bill was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for service to rural and remote communities through the establishment of Angel Flight Australia and as a supporter of charitable organisations.

Bill witnessed first hand how charity flying in the US was making such a difference to the lives of thousands of people.

“I was flying in the US with other pilots and they were sharing with me the extraordinary feeling they experienced through charity flying. They are able to fly – their greatest love - while at the same time help people going through hard times,” says Mr Bristow.

“I realised then Australia badly needed a similar service. With about 30% of the Australian population living outside metropolitan areas a very large number of people do not have easy access to major hospitals and treatment centres. I decided I had to do something about it and returned home with a new sense of purpose.”

#### ***The Rural Health Challenge***

From stories told by his friends living in remote areas, and through his association with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Bill was acutely aware of the extreme hardship experienced by rural communities and the potential risk placed on their health when living away from the major metropolitan centres.

“I was amazed to learn rural Australians have higher mortality rates and a greater incidence of heart disease, stroke and respiratory disease,” he adds.

“On top of this, when they need to access treatment for these conditions and others such as cancer and leukaemia, they have to endure extraordinarily long and uncomfortable trips by road, often on a regular basis. This information confirmed that Angel Flight could make a real difference to Australians.”

#### ***A Registered Australian Charity***

The Australian not-for-profit operation co-ordinates non-emergency flights for patients and families around the country in medical and financial need. Angel Flight services are entirely free to patients and carers.

Angel Flight pilots donate their time, their skills and the bulk of their aircraft costs\* for each flight.

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\* To help offset the pilots' operating costs Angel Flight Australia negotiates aviation fuel discounts and the waiver of landing fees at airports around the country. Airservices Australia reverse any air navigation charges. Donations received are used to fully subsidise fuel costs.



The volunteer pilots and aircraft owners' flight credentials exceed the requirements of CASA and the aircraft meet specified CASA and insurance minimums.

The pilots do not carry aeromedical staff or medical equipment and do not act as an alternative to the Royal Flying Doctor Service or Air Ambulance in that capacity.

Since April 2003 the number of volunteer pilots registered with Angel flight has increased from 88 to nearly 2,500 nationwide. Over 12,000 flights have been completed, helping over 2,000 patients, carers and family members, receive non-emergency medical or humanitarian help.

To date around 47% of flights have taken place from rural New South Wales, 24% Queensland, 22% Victoria, 3% South Australia, 2% Western Australia and 1% in Tasmania and Northern Territory.

### ***Missions For Those In Need***

Angel Flight seeks to assist financially needy people:

- patients of all ages, living in rural and remote areas, that need scheduled treatment at destinations where other forms of transport are physically and emotionally taxing or unaffordable
- patient carers and family members for compassionate reasons
- blood and blood products
- medical drugs
- anyone medically and financially disadvantaged.

To date, those helped by Angel Flight have included patients suffering leukaemia, lung cancer, brain tumours, liver, kidney or heart disease, bowel disorders, cystic fibrosis, osteoporosis, stroke and many more. Others have received ongoing post-operative care following accidents and a small percentage required humanitarian aid when faced with terminal illness.

### ***Accessing the Service***

Registered healthcare professionals, such as medical practitioners, nurses and social workers, are the people who register mission requests.

### ***Increasing Angel Flight Missions***

Bill Bristow anticipates requests for the service will continue to increase over the next twelve months. "We have already seen a substantial rise in requests as more people find out that we are here. But we really need to ensure more in need are aware of our existence," he adds. "We have co-ordinated almost 2,000 flights for the calendar year of 2011."

More information can be found on [www.angelflight.org.au](http://www.angelflight.org.au).



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### TOUCHED BY ANGEL FLIGHT

The flight missions conducted by Angel Flight have touched the lives of many families around Australia:-

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES: Narromine / Bankstown / Narromine**

##### **Three firsts for Narromine**



The departure of a Cessna 172 aircraft from Narromine represented three 'Firsts' for this small agricultural community.

It was the first flight for 8-year-old Sarah Everingham; the first Angel Flight out of Narromine and the first Angel Flight Mission for pilot Brian Thornton.

The purpose of this special flight was to make life a little easier for Sarah who has Cerebral Palsy. According to her father, John Everingham, Sarah is lucky to be alive and has never walked so this trip was an opportunity to see what could be done to help her.

"Sarah has what is called Severe Global Delay which has affected her development in a number of areas, but especially her walking," Mr Everingham said.

"For a long while after she was born she had to be fed by a tube and had lots of other complications. But she is now a bubbly little girl, she can get around on her hands and knees and even climb furniture so we're now doing everything

we can to help her walk."

Sarah is the second youngest of 10 children with five aged between 6 and 10 years still at home.

"I can't praise Angel Flight enough for helping us in this way," Mr Everingham said.

"The journey usually takes us about six hours by car which can be very tiring and difficult for Sarah. On top of that we are now having car problems making it impossible for us to drive there. It has made such a difference to us. I can't thank them enough."



# Angel<sup>TM</sup> Flight

**QUEENSLAND: Roma / Archerfield / Roma**

## **Roma boy swaps wheelchair for wings**



Since Roma boy Craig McKnight was born thirteen years ago he has struggled with severe pain, loss of speech and life in a wheelchair. Suffering from a rare Metabolic disorder with complex multiple physical problems, his situation has been made more difficult by the rarity of his condition.

Staying in one position for any length of time causes him extreme discomfort, which can exaggerate all of his symptoms, and in particular the pain he experiences due to the fact that he virtually has only one functioning hip joint.

Consequently, for Craig to travel long distances by road can be a nightmare for both him and his parents, Leonie and Graham McKnight, when they have to travel to Brisbane for treatment and monitoring.

"Being able to fly to Brisbane made a wonderful difference. It was a great relief knowing that the journey was taken care of and we could concentrate on what we wanted to get out of the doctor's visit because all that stress had been taken off us," Craig's mother, Leonie McKnight, said.

"The last time we had to take 'Craigie' to Brisbane by car, he arrived in a terrible state and suffered extreme tremors because of the severe discomfort from being so long on the road. It took about three days for him to recover which made the visit with the specialists extremely difficult."

Whilst Craig is unable to speak, he is extremely bright and manages to communicate through his body language and 'signing' to the degree his motor skills enable him.

Mrs McKnight said that about five years ago it was confirmed that his condition was degenerative and he wouldn't be around for ever and that's when she and her husband Graham 'lost the plot' for a while.

"It was so difficult to accept, and although Craigie was only about 8 or 9 at the time he understood and used to make Graham and me hold hands, letting us know that he wanted us to look after each other," she said.



# Angel<sup>TM</sup> Flight

**VICTORIA: Deniliquin / Essendon / Deniliquin**

## **Secret Santa Had A Date With An Angel Over Deniliquin**



At Christmas Secret Santa and Angels are not unusual, but the thought of Santa having a rendezvous with an Angel in the skies over Deniliquin is quite remarkable. Well, believe it or not, this is exactly what happened on Christmas Eve when a very special little boy flew home to spend Christmas with his family.

Six-year-old Ford Te Nahu returned home for Christmas on board an Angel flight, after yet another course of chemotherapy in Melbourne.

Whilst this Christmas Eve's random act of kindness bought some joy into the lives of Ford and his family, it didn't stop there.

When the Deniliquin Aero Club heard about Ford's trip home, some members thought it would be great to divert Santa from his Southern Route to intercept this Angel flight and escort him into town from about 10 nautical miles out of Deniliquin.

It's hard to imagine the delight that Ford and his mother Corinne experienced as another light aircraft appeared in view – at a safe distance of course – and there waving through the window was Santa. Santa was also there to greet them when they landed.



# Angel<sup>TM</sup> Flight

## **FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND: Coen / Cairns / Coen**

### **First Angel Flight For Coen Reunites Family For Christmas**



Traditionally Christmas is a time for family, fun and festivities, but unfortunately it can be a lonely and sad time for those experiencing sickness and separation from those they love.

This would certainly have been the case for one Coen family if not for Angel Flight. Within hours of receiving a call from the Cairns Base Hospital, Angel Flight organised to pick up nine-year-old Walter and ten-year-old Nicol to be reunited with their mother and baby sister Shaneeka whom they had not seen for almost two months.

Shaneeka was just two months old when she became listless and could only be encouraged to take tiny sips of milk. Extremely concerned for her daughter's well being, Minnie Kulla Kulla sought medical help, which resulted in her baby being rushed by the Royal Flying Doctor to Cairns Base Hospital.

"Shaneeka was diagnosed with severe Meningitis and I was really frightened when she had to be put into ICU because she was not breathing properly and her condition remained critical," Minnie said.



"My partner Gavin was flown here to Cairns to be with me but my two sons stayed behind in Coen in the care of other family members."

Minnie said that the separation was really hard on the family and it was important that they were all together again especially at this time of year.



"For the short time they were together Shaneeka (now in Brisbane receiving further treatment) seemed happy to hear her brothers playing and this was thanks to Angel Flight," Minnie said.



**WESTERN AUSTRALIA: Jandakot to Geraldton**

**In memory of Zoe Alexander – An Angel at Peace**



Fighting Acute Myeloid Leukaemia Zoe required palliative care. Unable to physically and emotionally withstand the rigours of a road or rail journey, Angel Flight was asked to fly Zoe, Elise her sister and Debra her mother home so the family could be together.

*"Thank you for your assistance with this family. I was fortunate to attend Zoe's funeral in Geraldton, and was very humbled by the great support offered by friends and the wider community to this lovely family. The family had a song made by some school friends which was played which was lovely, and released butterflies. I will continue to be in contact with this family and will pass on your condolences."*

*Iris Barten  
Oncology Social Worker  
Princess Margaret Hospital*



**SOUTH AUSTRALIA: Kimba / Parafield / Kimba**

**Kimba Boy [14] "Touched By Angels"**



Fourteen year-old Bradley Driver met his first 'Angel' who flew into Kimba on a very special mission.

The mission was to make life a little easier for Bradley who, during the previous twelve months, had spent more than 17 weeks in Adelaide Children's Hospital, undergoing a number of lengthy and painful operations, after he was diagnosed with Familial Adenomatous Polyposis [FAP].

In addition to the obvious pain and discomfort he experienced, Bradley was faced with the very long journey by road to and from Adelaide, which frequently took well in excess of six hours due to the need for constant rest breaks.

Mrs Andrew said that Bradley's condition is hereditary which was only discovered after his father was diagnosed with FAP early last year.

"About 50% of children of affected parents are at risk of inheriting this disease, and unfortunately Bradley is one of the 50%," Mrs Andrew said.

"Since the diagnosis Bradley has had lots of surgery, including the removal of his large bowel, after the doctors discovered numerous polyps in his bowel and stomach, which if left were almost certain to lead to cancer."

When she found out about the service offered by Angel Flight, Mrs Andrew said she couldn't believe there are so many wonderful people.

"I am amazed at the generosity of Angel Flight pilots. I see so many hurting people who nobody seems to want to help, and now I've discovered people who care and are willing to go that extra mile. This is going to make so much difference to Bradley and all of us," she said.

"Bradley really hates going to the hospital after so much surgery and the journey just added to his stress. The travel has also been quite a burden on all the family so we were really grateful for this very special help."



## **PATIENTS OF ALL AGES:**

### **Queensland Border: Mungindi / Toowoomba**

#### **Flooded Roads Attracts Angels To Mungindi**

Road closures caused by torrential rain over SE Queensland and Northern New South Wales can have devastating consequences for those living in remote areas. This has certainly been the case for two Mungindi residents who, because of road closures, feared they would be unable to travel to Toowoomba for vital medical treatment.

Thanks to the dedication of Angel Flight pilots, Barry and Cheryl Arentz of Brisbane, their fears were allayed and they travelled by air to Toowoomba on two separate flights absolutely free of charge.

The first of the two flights left Mungindi on Sunday 12th December with 82-year-old Jim Nolan on board. Travelling with his wife, Shirley, Jim was scheduled to undergo back surgery on Monday 13th December and was advised that the operation was critical and any delay should be avoided. They arrived in Toowoomba an hour later.



The Angel Flight pilots, Cheryl and Barry, then returned to Mungindi, this time to pick up Russell Frew. With severe pain in his left arm arising from an infection related to previous wrist and arm injuries, it was vital that Russell saw a specialist to assess his condition with the likelihood of him requiring immediate surgery.



Having already completed three previous Angel Flight Missions, Barry and Cheryl reflect the spirit of Angel Flight, by always being willing, even at short notice, to fly needy patients and compassionate carers free of charge to receive medical help.



# Angel Flight™

**New South Wales: Forbes / Bankstown / Forbes**

## **Sydney Angel Finds His Way To Forbes To Help Five-Month-Old Baby**



The first Angel Flight out of Forbes transported five-month-old Travis Bond to Sydney for treatment at Westmead Children's Hospital.

Suffering from a disorder called Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita, Travis needs monthly physical therapy as well as the renewal of splints/plaster casts to prevent his joints from stiffening as they grow.

This rare condition affects 1 in 3000 babies and is characterised by the affected baby having two or more joints in more than one limb in a fixed position.

In Travis' case, all of his limbs are affected and in addition he has no shoulder muscles.

According to his mother Lisa, there were no indications before his birth that there was anything wrong and subsequent tests have revealed that her son's condition is not hereditary with the cause not yet identified.

"When I had an ultrasound at 28 weeks I was told my baby was very small and probably struggling to feed through the umbilical cord but nothing else was picked up," she said.

"But then because he was in the breach position I had a Caesarean Section at 39 weeks in Orange Hospital. He was born with his wrists curled under, his shoulders and elbows were round the wrong way and one leg was stiff. Because they hadn't seen a baby like this before, when he was just four days old we were taken to the Children's Hospital at Westmead where we stayed for two weeks whilst they carried out tests and organised a course of treatment."

To prevent the joints from stiffening as he grows and to improve mobility, every month Lisa and Travis have to return to Westmead so that special splints and soft casts can be renewed and continuing assessment carried out.

