

BRISBANE TIMES

Alex soars for Royal Flying Doctor Service

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State political reporter

17-year-old Alex Fisher will fly around Australia for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Photo: Michelle Smith



Two years ago Alex Fisher stepped off a helicopter joy flight and just knew. Like Icarus, he belonged to the sky.

But the 17-year-old Cleveland teen is in no danger of flying too close to the sun. While his heart belongs to the clouds, his head remains firmly on the ground.

It is this combination of passion and determination, dreams and drive that brought the Iona College student to a small Brisbane airfield on Sunday morning just three weeks after gaining his private pilot licence, about to embark on a 19-day solo journey around Australia's coastline.

His mapped out route will take him from Brisbane to Airlie Beach, up to the Cape, across to Darwin, down past Broome and Perth then into South Australia before a jump to King Island and across to Tassie.

He will fly back through Victoria before starting the climb to Archerfield in Queensland, via New South Wales, making up to 46 stops in 19 days.

The solo coastal circumnavigation of Australia might never have been achieved by someone so young that he only just passed his driver's licence test.

And that, said Alex, is the point.

“I believe the youth of Australia are very strong,” he said.

“I believe if we all get together and help our community organisations Australia can be an even better country than it already is.

“Our route, flying coast wise, has never been recorded that I can find, especially at my age. No one has done it. Everyone is going for around the world and I thought why not aim a little bit smaller and do something no one else has ever done before.”

The 13,954 km Flight of Solidarity will log him another 80 hours in the air, the same amount he’s officially accumulated over the past two years as he worked towards first his recreational and then private pilot’s licences, and is in aid of the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

After finishing high school he hopes to hit them up for a job.

“The Royal Flying Doctor Service links into my passion for aviation but it is also because of the amazing work they do,” he said.

“They service over 200,000 Australians every year, which is almost one person every two minutes, which is just amazing.”

Alex will spend his winter school holidays “and probably the first couple of days of school” with his plane, a Cessna 172 four seater single engine, which is twice as old as he is.

It was donated by Geoff Shield, an air traffic controller at the Archerfield airport, who appreciated Alex’s determination and passion.

“It is a lot older than me but it is a great aircraft and it will get the job done,” he said.

And he can’t think of better company to spend three weeks with.

“It is just an amazing feeling. It is hard to explain but getting up in the air and you are at the controls of the aircraft and flying like a bird - it is something special.”

Extract from <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/alex-soars-for-royal-flying-doctor-service-20140621-zshha.html>