

Wheelies with Wings take to Temora skies

An inspirational program held at Temora Aerodrome recently has literally proved the sky is the limit for three people who have lower limb disabilities.

The team of three, lead by Canberra flying instructor, James Perham, began their two week flight training course on April 20, as part of the Wheelies with Wings program.

Developed 11 years ago, Wheelies with Wings is a charitable organisation which promotes the rehabilitation of selected physically disabled individuals.

The organisation was founded by Suzi Duncan, a woman who

contracted polio as an infant and was initially paralysed from the neck down.

Ms Duncan started learning to fly in December 1990, after major hip surgery failed and she was told she would never walk again.

Flying gave her the courage to walk again and a freedom she could only dream about.

Her own flying experience was an inspiration to help other people with physical disabilities take to the skies.

Through an extensive live-in course away from their home and carer, students in the program undertake between 12 and 20 hours of training,

ground and air instruction to learn how to pilot an aircraft fitted with a modified hand control.

While the course does not earn a recognised Private Pilots licence, it does provide a basis to achieve one, as well as creating a new horizon of achievement for its graduates.

Chairman of the Wheelies with Wings Organisation, David Clegg, said the flying course gave people with disabilities a psychological boost.

"The program is very motivational," Mr Clegg said.

"Flying a paraplegic doesn't sound like a mix, but this is just an exam-

ple of the many limitations able-bodied persons place on people with disabilities.

"If you asked most of the people on the street if they can fly a plane, the majority of them would say no.

"Wheelies with wings not only gives people without lower limb capability the opportunity to fly, but it also shows them that if they can fly, they can do anything.

Mr Clegg said the program featured a living-away component, which also helped participants gain independence.

"During the program they live with two or three other people, with a different extent of dis-

abilities," Mr Clegg said.

"They live away from their home and carer, breaking the umbilical cord of constant support to none."

The course was previously held in Cooma,

however Wheelies with Wings has now moved to Temora Aerodrome permanently.

Mr Clegg said Temora was chosen as the new location for the course because of the town's

strong interest in aviation, stable weather conditions and three runway aerodrome.

Further information and scholarship details can be obtained at wheelieswithwings.com.



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