



Speech by

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CORPORATE ANGEL NETWORK OF AUSTRALIA

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (11.13 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I rise to inform the House of a relatively new charity to Australia—the Corporate Angel Network of Australia. In general, this charity aims to arrange free air travel between the home port and the treatment centre for cancer and leukaemia patients, bone marrow donors and their guardians and carers. Travellers must be able to walk unaided to the aircraft and have a doctor's certificate of travel capability. Financial need is not a consideration for eligibility to receive assistance.

Now that I have explained some of the aims of the organisation, let me tell honourable members how it came to be. The Corporate Angel Network of Australia is a totally Australian-owned and controlled private company incorporated under Australian corporate law and registered as a charity in Queensland. The Corporate Angel Network exists for the sole purpose of providing free transport for patients to and from treatment centres for qualifying persons as stated earlier, namely cancer patients, leukaemia patients, bone marrow donors and their carers.

CAN is a not-for-profit organisation. CAN Australia was founded by Michael and Helene McCarthy after reading of such an organisation which has been operating successfully in the United States of America for some 17 years. Helene was in the recovery stage after major cancer surgery and was drawn to a book entitled "Chicken Soup for the Surviving Soul—101 Stories of Courage and Inspiration from Those Who Have Survived Cancer" as a motivational tool to aid her mental and emotional recovery following this personal family trauma.

Michael and Helene read of the original CAN and how it was founded and structured and determined that, if the need existed, they could make such a venture work in Australia. Medical opinion in Queensland is that the need definitely exists for such an organisation and that such an organisation can only benefit patients and enhance their recovery prospects, as it is much more beneficial to a patient's physical and mental wellbeing if he or she can travel on short duration air travel rather than long-term distance rail or coach trips when required to report for treatment. In some regions of Queensland, for example, a two to three-hour flight can replace up to two days' travel each way on a coach or train.

The benefits of this reduced stress to the recovery prospects of a patient are incalculable. This opinion is supported by the Leukaemia Foundation of Australia and the Queensland Cancer Fund. The Leukaemia Foundation has been particularly supportive of the efforts of Michael and Helene McCarthy and CAN and has offered valuable advice and assistance.

CAN USA uses empty seats on corporate aircraft to provide free travel from home to a treatment centre and return for cancer and leukaemia patients, their carers and bone marrow donors. Due to the smaller number of corporate aircraft in Australia which operate on scheduled routes and times, it was decided that in Australia CAN should use a combination of air transport systems. CAN proposes to use empty seats on corporate aircraft wherever possible, convince airlines to allow people to donate frequent flier points to enable the target group to travel, seek assistance from regional airlines in providing empty seats for the patients—a very noble gesture—and to use private pilots building up navigation hours towards commercial licences. It is hoped that the target groups can be carried free of charge on appropriate routes.

To this end, CAN has requested the indulgence of this Parliament in using this forum to explain its concept of supporting the ongoing health requirements of this very needy group in our society—cancer victims. The beauty of this organisation is that the whole operation is not reliant on public or private funding, although donations will be well and truly accepted if offered. Like the old barter system, the whole idea operates on donations in kind, not in cash.

Donations consist of people donating their time to work on a voluntary basis in the Corporate Angel Network office, corporations and regional airlines donating an empty seat on an aircraft which is already travelling on a route required by CAN patients, and people donating a percentage of their personal frequent flier points so that CAN patients can use them. This latter concept has yet to be approved by the airlines, but what a brilliant concept.

Giving away approved frequent flier points to assist battling members of the community—battling not just disease but the tyranny of distance—is a worthy cause. To those airlines and their corporate directors who have a big heart I commend the Corporate Angel Network. To find out more, people can contact CAN care of Michael and Helene McCarthy, whose postal address is Post Office Box 28, Beachmere, Queensland. It is a very worthwhile charity with very worthwhile aims. It will help and assist cancer patients to get to and from the care that they need. It is a worthwhile charity and I commend it to the House and to the airlines, if they are listening.
