



18 September 2023

## Hayden to fly into Rex to talk about Wings without Barriers

ABC Trailblazer winner Hayden McDonald will fly into Charlton next Monday 25 September for a special community event at The Rex Theatre starting at 1.30 pm.

A partnership event between the North Central LLEN Buloke Engage! program and the Wycheproof P-12 College MATES program, Hayden will "check-in" at Charlton as part of a solo flight around regional Australia.

Hayden is autistic and a pilot and has established "Wings Without Barriers" to combine his passions for aviation and promoting real inclusion for people on the spectrum.

Hayden wants to inspire young people and show them that you can break down those barriers no matter what challenges you face in life.

Hayden left Esperance in his J120 Jabiru earlier this month, and there will be 60 stops along the way where he will present to schools and communities to show other young people that the sky's the limit.

Hayden said that through this platform he would like to share the everyday challenges he faces living on the spectrum, and to create an understanding and acceptance of autism.

"I successfully got my recreational pilot's certificate at 17, but when I started the medical process to apply for commercial training, I received an email stating the intention to deny my medical application."

"This was because I was on the spectrum and therefore it created an unacceptable risk for aeronautical navigation," he said.

"This was my motivation behind Wings Without Barriers and why it's important to speak out about being assessed on our ability, not disability," said Hayden.

During February Hayden was a winner of ABC Trailblazers which helped cement an idea that had been brewing for a while - to fly solo around regional Australia.

Hayden's presentation at the Rex Theatre will be followed by a free screening of Temple Grandin starring Claire Danes.

Temple Grandin is the story of an autistic woman who overcame the limitations imposed on her by her condition to become a Ph.D. and expert in the field of animal husbandry.

She is noted for creating her "hug box", widely recognized today as a way of relieving stress in autistic children, and her humane design for the treatment of cattle in processing plants, which have been the subject of several books and won an award from PETA.

Doors for this free community event will open at 1.00 pm for a 1.30 pm start.

-- ends --