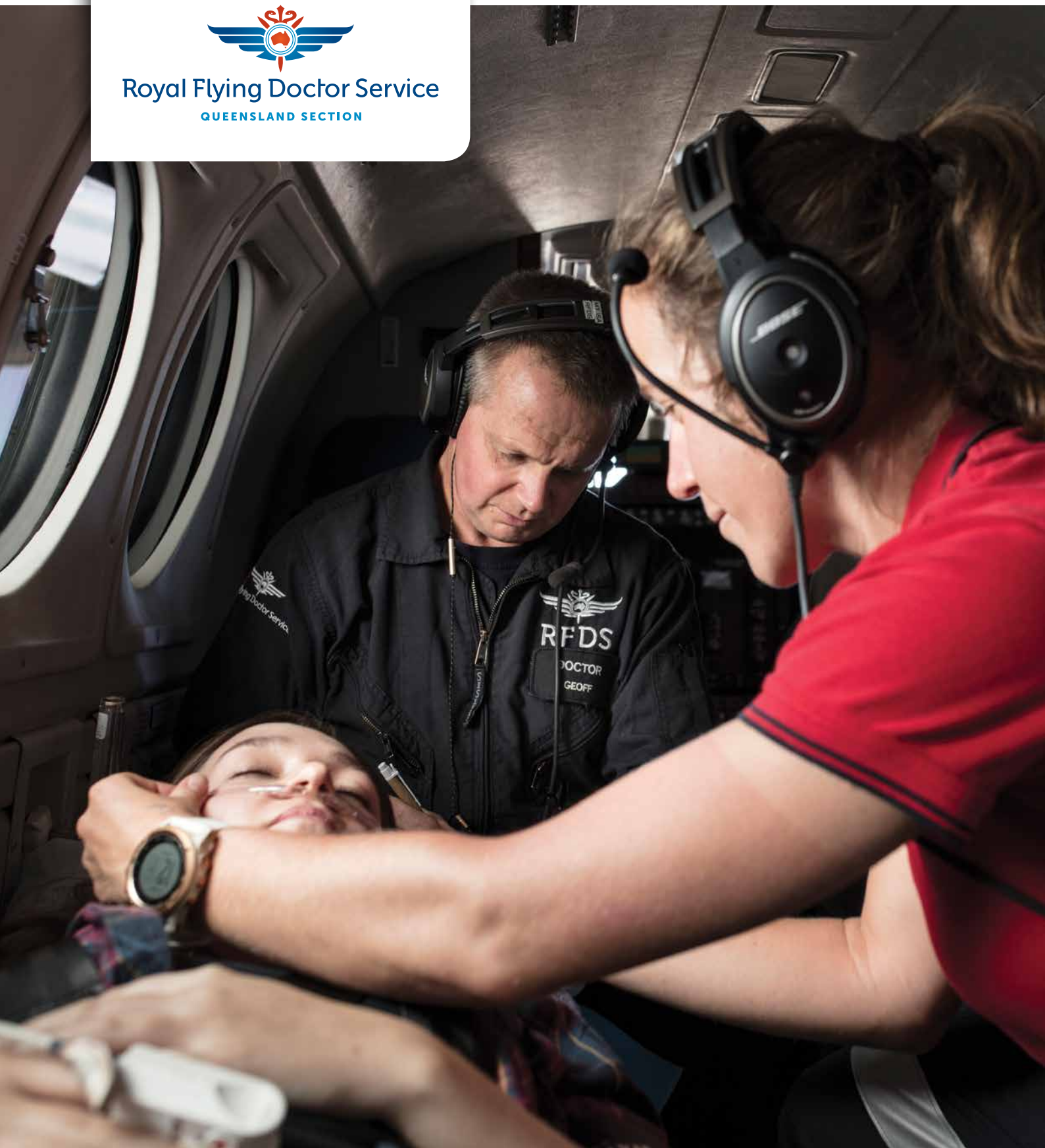




Royal Flying Doctor Service
QUEENSLAND SECTION



QUEENSLAND SECTION
2016/17

The furthest corner. The finest care.





Providing excellence in primary health care and aeromedical service across Queensland.

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From the Chairman



MARK GRAY – CHAIRMAN

The past year has been one of considerable progress for RFDS Queensland Section, as we've pursued improvements designed to strengthen and future proof the organisation, while continuing to uphold our high standards of clinical and aviation performance and provide access to vital health care to over 90,000 people.

In October 2016, with the assistance of industry experts in the health and aviation markets, Dr John O'Donnell (former CEO of Mater Health) and David Hall (former CEO of Jetstar), we embarked on a thorough review of our organisation aimed at ensuring we achieve best practice in quality and safety to support the wide range of health services delivered by our frontline people.

From this review, we implemented key changes to our Executive Leadership Team, with the development of two newly defined positions, namely a Chief Operating Officer position responsible for day to day service delivery obligations and a Head of Clinical Governance, responsible for clinical practice standards. A review of our non-frontline support functions was also undertaken as part of our continued focus on delivering efficiency gains while not compromising on quality and safety standards or service delivery.

As part of this commitment to best practice, our aviation team further strengthened our enviable safety record by becoming the first aeromedical provider in Australia to achieve full certification under the International Standard for Business Aviation Aircraft (IS-BAO).

This certification is regarded as world's best practice in our aircraft class, and achieving this is a demonstration of our aviation team's dedication and professionalism.

We have also recently moved to a single source aircraft maintenance provider in line with our recently certified international best practice standard in aviation safety.

Underpinning these important changes is our desire to ensure our Queensland services meet and perform to world's best practice standards in all that we do, across both our primary health care and aeromedical services.

Meanwhile our clinical teams continued to work tirelessly on implementing further policy and practice improvements under our National Quality and Health Safety Standards (NSQHS) accreditation obtained in 2016.

This NSQHS accreditation is again an important independent and objective benchmark of the high standards of our patient care across our aeromedical and primary health care programs, and we are proud to be among the first aeromedical providers in Australia to have achieved this.

Supplementing the focus on safety and quality, we have worked hard during the year to maintain and strengthen relationships with our key stakeholders and funders. The Board is forever mindful of ensuring that the Flying Doctor legacy ensures and prospers. We therefore owe a great debt of gratitude to those thousands of individual donors, corporate supporters and community groups that continue to provide such marvellous charitable support making our task infinitely easier.

This year the organisation is pleased to achieve a net operating surplus of \$4.2 million, aided significantly by the \$14.8 million in fundraising support we have received from our donors and supporters, which has been used to significantly underwrite our new B350 King Air aircraft platform, purchase an array of highly sophisticated medical equipment and continue to deliver programs such as our mental health, oral health and health promotion initiatives that would otherwise not have been possible.

But undoubtedly, our thanks also must go to our close to 350 RFDS staff across Queensland, who whilst undergoing significant reform, have continued to exemplify our commitment to patients and their communities. To all concerned my sincerest gratitude for your tireless efforts and my well wishes for the year ahead, as we celebrate our 90th anniversary in 2018.



Mark Gray | Chairman

From the CEO



NINO DI MARCO – CEO

Each year, the Royal Flying Doctor Service strives to uphold its reputation as a leading provider of primary health care and aeromedical services to rural and remote Australia. And this year was no different for the Queensland Section.

This past year has been one of significant reform with a committed focus on improving the efficiency and effective delivery of our diverse range of health care services.

To ensure we continue to achieve best practice in Quality and Safety across all parts of the RFDS in an increasingly competitive and challenging funding environment, we have implemented many reforms that will support our ability to deliver health services across Qld.

Our aeromedical operations have focussed heavily on the successful introduction of our new B350 King Air, with three of the four newly purchased airframes having been brought into operation in the past 12 months. Equipped with a unique three stretcher configuration, improved navigation and an ability to fly further and faster, we have already begun to see their benefits, particularly in the coastal areas of our operations and the important inter-hospital patient transfer services we provide within Queensland Health's hospital system.

The implementation of the B350s along with its smaller contemporary, the B200, has allowed us to consolidate our aircraft fleet into effectively a single type, a more efficient fleet that also simplifies our pilot training and aircraft maintenance programs.

In addition to this new fleet type and as a further boost to our aviation performance, RFDS was delighted to become the launch customer of a new world class flight simulator centre based at Maroochydore Airport, which has a dedicated B350 simulator that we will use extensively to train our pilots. The availability of such a Centre, the first of its type in Australia, was launched early in 2017. It now means we will no longer need to send our pilots overseas for such training, saving the organisation considerably.

From a health care service delivery perspective, both our primary evacuation and inter-hospital aeromedical services continued to expand, with over 11,359 patients moved in the past year.

Elsewhere, our primary health clinic program saw more than 44,000 patients and our telehealth program performed some 12,459 medical consults. In terms of future growth, we have been thrilled to be part of a recently launched telehealth initiative that will see the progressive roll out of video-conferencing to all our primary health clinic locations in the coming years, with the first pilot location of Yowah in south west Queensland recently deploying the new technology. This enhancement to our remote clinic program is an important service for our patients that will improve medical care in between our remote clinic visits.

Our mobile dental program continued its visitation across rural and remote Queensland, with the Service now on a sustainable funding pathway having transitioned to a federally funded service as part of the Commonwealth Government's partnership with the RFDS to deliver a national rural and remote dental program.

The now renamed RFDS Dental Service, previously the QCoal Community Dental Service was relaunched in April this year. In implementing this change, the RFDS wishes to acknowledge the support of the Service's founding partners, QCoal Group and the QCoal Foundation for their significant support of the program since its inception in 2013 and the \$4 million worth of free dental treatment afforded to over 8,000 patients in need in this period.

Our mental health programs, which saw 16,736 patient consultations in 2016/17, have continued to be well received with welcome news that our Queensland Health funded, Drought Wellbeing Service is set to continue for a further 12 months, with our team of clinical psychologists in Longreach, Mount Isa, Charleville, Townsville, and Bundaberg providing tailored counselling and support services to many drought-affected communities.

While celebrating the continuity of one mental health program, it is with a tinge of sadness that one of our cornerstone programs in the Cairns and Cape York regions transitioned from RFDS hands.



The furthest corner. The finest care.

After a successful decade of providing a Social and Emotional Wellbeing program, including the establishment of Wellbeing Centres in the indigenous communities of Aurukun, Coen, Mossman Gorge, and Hope Vale, the RFDS successfully transitioned these services to community control in March this year, as part of an agreed 10-year transition program with the Commonwealth Department of Health.

The RFDS was initially contracted to establish these centres and to develop community capacity to self-manage with a view to eventually assisting local indigenous communities to assume responsibility for their ongoing services. The RFDS remains committed to these communities through our aeromedical and GP clinic services. RFDS is pleased to have played this vital role over the past decade since the establishment of the program.

While the delivery of health care programs across the State is an ever-changing landscape, one thing remains a constant source of strength and inspiration – the support we receive from the community. So too is the support of our major corporate supporters, such as Ergon Energy Retail, Brisbane Airport Corporation, QCoal Group, Woolworths, Hawker Pacific, McCullough Robertson and many other businesses that lend us a hand – to all of you our heartfelt thanks and I trust this support endures.

Thank you one and all for your efforts to keep the Flying Doctor flying and in helping us continue in our quest to deliver the finest care to the furthest corner.

Nino Di Marco | CEO

From a health care service delivery perspective, both our primary evacuation and IHT aeromedical services continued to excel with over 11,359 missions in the past year.

RFDS Queensland Section's year in numbers



11,359

Patients flown by the RFDS in 2016/17



7,524,025

Kilometres flown by the Queensland Section in the past year



350

Staff members across the entire scope of the Queensland Section





1,490

RFDS Dental
Service patients



3,139

Primary health
care clinics



12,459

Remote consultation
Calls through our
telehealth service



16,736

Mental health
clinic patient
consultations





Pilots

The RFDS pilots are at the forefront of aeromedical aviation and enjoy being part of a multi-disciplined organisation that prides itself in providing a dedicated aeromedical and primary health care service to regional and outback Queensland. Each of our 62 pilots across Queensland have at least 2,000 flight hours, with our aeromedical retrieval pilots requiring at least 4,000 flight hours and 2,000 hours in command.



Our people

All RFDS frontline staff are renowned as being some of the most highly trained and qualified in the country. Backed up by a dedicated and professional cohort of support staff and engineers, our almost 350 strong workforce works tirelessly to ensure we uphold our reputation as Australia's leading remote area primary health care and aeromedical provider.



VICKI HARRISON – PILOT, TOWNSVILLE

For pilot Vicki Harrison, what started as a much-loved hobby with her mother turned into a career she could have never imagined. It's a career that has allowed her to do what she's passionate about every day while helping people - and one with an unbeatable view from the 'office window'.

From a young age, Vicki was inspired by her mother who was learning to fly. Often joining as a passenger, it quickly became Vicki's obsession and she eventually flew her first plane in 1990 - before she'd even driven a car!

After 18 years with the RAAF, Vicki saw a unique opportunity to use her hard-earned skills and eagerness for flying with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. It was a one-of-a-kind chance to help communities while doing what she loved. The connection she felt with the RFDS was also a driving force behind her decision to join the team.

out there doing it your way. When you have to deal with bad weather, potential emergencies or issues with the aircraft - that's where your experience really comes in. In the middle of the night with a couple of patients on board and storms in the area, it can be a bit harrowing. That's when you fall back on your training, follow check lists, step through what you've been taught and keep calm".

Since joining RFDS in 2010, Vicki has been based in Townsville. Away from the flight deck, she loves spending time at home with her husband, as well as all her animals - Rogue the dog, cats Nemo and Xenia and her chickens. Family balance is so important to Vicki and is something she's always managed to have, even as a shift-worker. Despite the far from average 9-5 job, advanced rostering allows her to plan her days off ahead of time and maintain a life she loves away from work.

Compared to working for a commercial airline, you're on your own. You're the pilot, you're the captain. You're out there doing it your way. When you have to deal with bad weather, potential emergencies or issues with the aircraft - that's where your experience really comes in.

"Even though mum passed away in 2008, I knew she would have been thrilled that I was combining a career that combined health and aviation. With her work as a nurse and love of flying, she had always wanted to work with the RFDS."

Vicki's role involves primarily flying inter-hospital transfer flights from her Base in Townsville. But this doesn't mean she hasn't put her flying skills to the test! From landing with only diesel soaked toilet rolls lighting her path, to hitting a kangaroo on landing and bending two propeller blades; Vicki has gained incredible experience she knows is unique to working with RFDS.

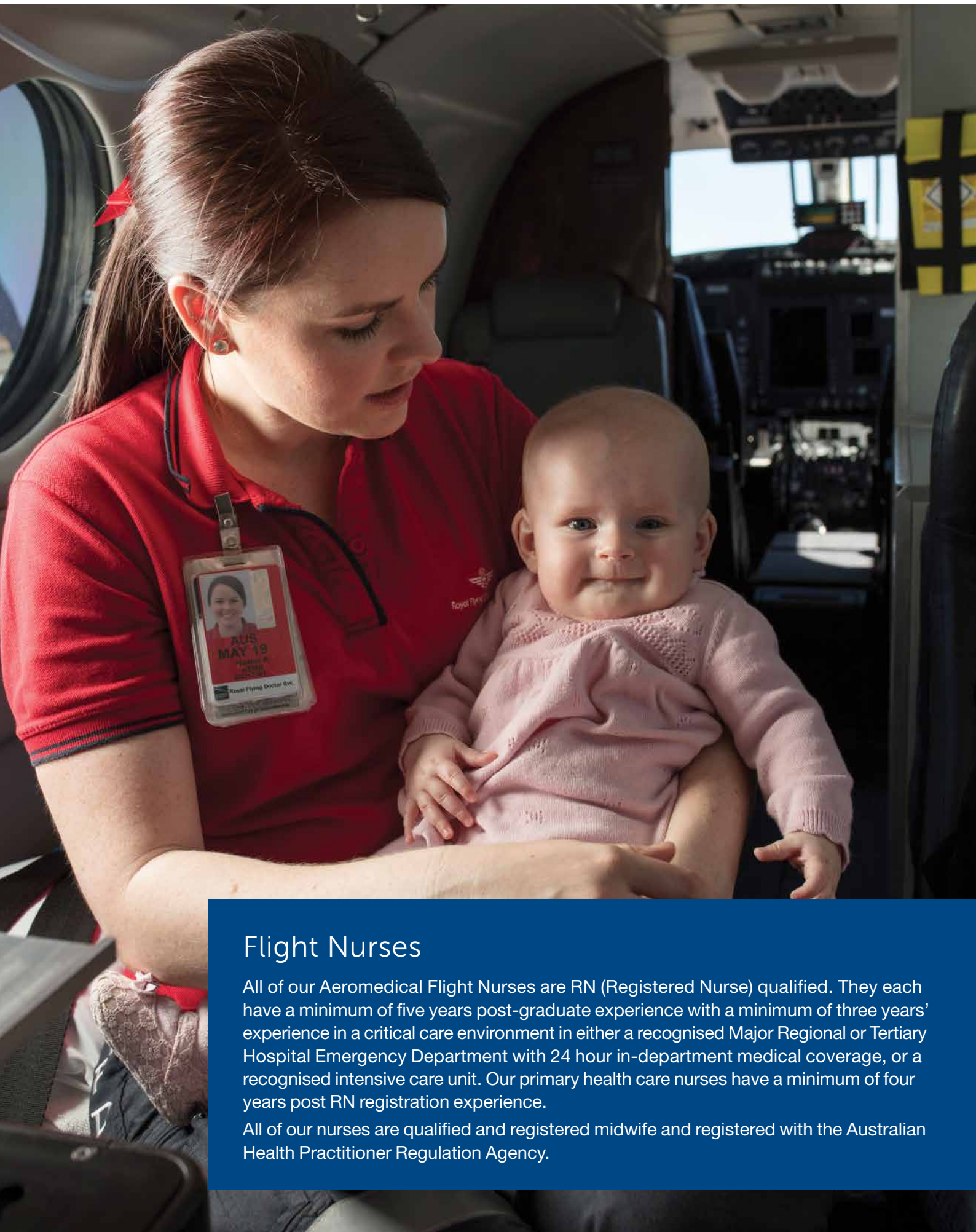
"Compared to working for a commercial airline, you're on your own. You're the pilot, you're the captain. You're

Aside from being able to do what she's passionate about every day, Vicki gets immense satisfaction from working with highly skilled professionals and the team and community spirit around her. Beyond this, it's the people she meets and helps on every shift who fill her with pride for the work she does with RFDS.

"There is not a single person who hasn't shown gratitude when we go to help them. What more could you ask for?"

As for the person in Vicki's life who encouraged and supported her to take on an extraordinary career?

"Mum definitely made me the woman and pilot I am today. I reckon she'd be proud."



Flight Nurses

All of our Aeromedical Flight Nurses are RN (Registered Nurse) qualified. They each have a minimum of five years post-graduate experience with a minimum of three years' experience in a critical care environment in either a recognised Major Regional or Tertiary Hospital Emergency Department with 24 hour in-department medical coverage, or a recognised intensive care unit. Our primary health care nurses have a minimum of four years post RN registration experience.

All of our nurses are qualified and registered midwife and registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.



LAURA BRATBY – FLIGHT NURSE, BRISBANE

In a job where no two days are the same, RFDS Flight Nurse, Laura Bratby is motivated by mental resilience, a supportive team and knowing she's helping people who need her the most.

Beginning her nursing career in a hospital emergency department, Laura fell in love with the fast-paced environment and the challenge of never knowing what she'd be dealing with next.

From early on, Laura had her sights set on joining the RFDS and never let go of this goal.

After dedicating her time to building her skills by gaining a midwifery qualification and working in an intensive care unit, Laura readily accepted a flight nurse role in Mount Isa when the opportunity arose. Today, Laura works at the RFDS Brisbane Base and there are stark differences between the RFDS and the hospital environment she once knew.

how her colleagues in non-medical roles are contributing to life-saving work and the mission of the RFDS.

"Everyone in the team is there because they want a job that means something more."

Laura and her team never tire of the rich reward that comes with meeting people who are always appreciative of RFDS. She is yet to meet anyone who isn't incredibly thankful for the RFDS and how they help. The intense pride and affiliation that the entire team feels is something Laura knows is unique to RFDS. She is always quick to encourage others to join, but only if they're up for the challenge!

Laura emphasises that strength, mental resilience and leadership are essential to handling the unique pressures of being a Flight Nurse.

"If you're the type of person who needs structure this

If you're the type of person who needs structure this job isn't for you. You need to be agile and always ready to go. You have to be mentally strong and willing to back yourself because if you don't, it's a disaster waiting to happen.

"It can be daunting going from a big hospital where there are a number of nurses and doctors, to the back of an aircraft in a remote area. It can be just you and the pilot, often without a doctor. But I always say we wouldn't be in the job if we weren't completely confident in our clinical knowledge and skills."

Up in the air, Laura and other flight nurses and doctors have another job many people may not realise – they are flight crew too! Because of this, sometimes, she can be required on flights when not clinically involved with a patient, often when assisting a specialist team from the originating hospital is required.

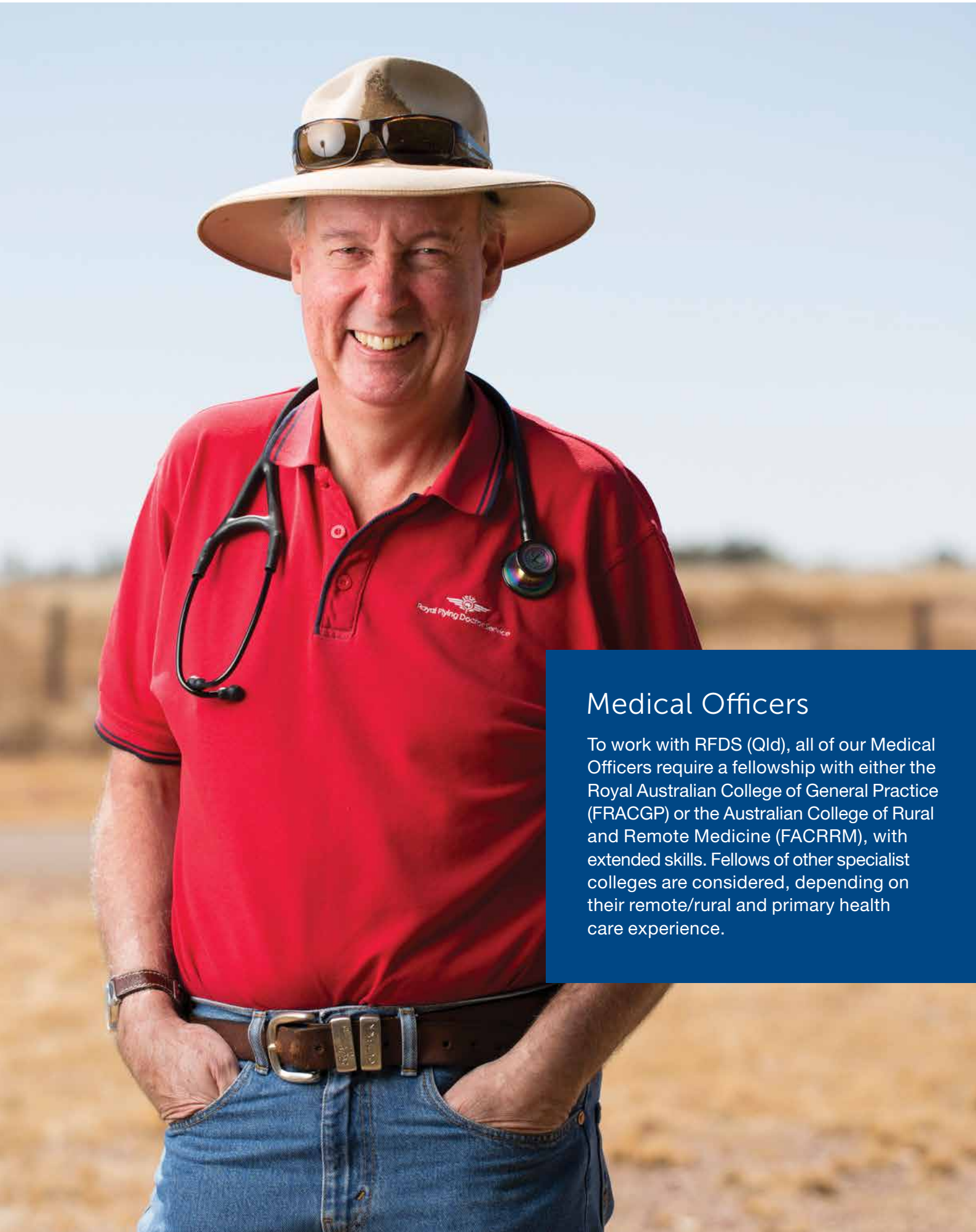
While Laura's focus is always on the frontline, she knows she couldn't do her vital job without the experienced people behind the scenes. She describes her team as amazing, caring and highly knowledgeable and loves

job isn't for you. You need to be agile and always ready to go. You have to be mentally strong and willing to back yourself because if you don't, it's a disaster waiting to happen. At the end of the day, if you're out there on your own, you just have to get it done and be confident in your skills."

From visiting remote places she would otherwise never dream of, to working in a diverse team, Laura says she cannot see herself leaving the dynamic environment she has grown so used to.

"It would be so hard for me to go back to a hospital now. At RFDS, you never know what you're flying into. You turn up to the Base with the pilot, pack the aircraft and fly out to the patient. The dynamic working environment is invigorating."

From visiting remote places she would otherwise never dream of, to working in a diverse team, Laura says she cannot see herself leaving the dynamic environment she has grown so used to.



Medical Officers

To work with RFDS (Qld), all of our Medical Officers require a fellowship with either the Royal Australian College of General Practice (FRACGP) or the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (FACRRM), with extended skills. Fellows of other specialist colleges are considered, depending on their remote/rural and primary health care experience.



You're never just wearing one hat," she says. "You're always flipping, for example, between primary health care or chronic disease management, and then an emergency occurs and then suddenly you've got to go into a critical care emergency role.



DR. ABBY HARWOOD – CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Her office may be in Cairns, but RFDS (Queensland Section) Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Abby Harwood's heart will always be in the bush.

With over 20 years of clinical experience, Abby has worked in a diverse range of health settings (primarily within remote locations), including general practice and Indigenous health; in-patient/out-patient hospital services; emergency care and remote area clinics; clinical governance; medical education and research; and aeromedical retrieval.

However, after two decades in remote health care, with extensive experience in far remote Western Australia, Abby decided it was time to look for her next challenge, and along with it, a change of lifestyle.

"At the time, I was tossing up between moving to Darwin or Cairns when a good friend of mine, who was a RFDS Medical Officer at the time, told me of a position opening at the RFDS Cairns Base for a Senior Medical Officer. The timing was perfect," Abby said.

Successful in her application, Abby joined the RFDS Queensland Section in 2016.

Drawing on her experience, she is a thought leader in remote health and is frequently called upon to give her opinion on potential government policies and health issues, having appeared in the media multiple times. Her passion for remote health, and those who provide it, is always evident.

"It takes a certain type of personality to succeed as a RFDS Medical Officer," Abby says. "It's why you'll find a lot of our Medical Officers have either been working with the RFDS for a long time, or have come from a strong background in remote health care.

"You have to be flexible - other people might call it resilient, but you must have the flexibility to work in a huge range of environments. You must be adaptable."

Abby holds a number of qualifications, including a Bachelor of Medicine; Bachelor of Surgery (University of Western Australia); Graduate Diploma in Rural General Practice; Diploma of Obstetrics and Gynaecology; Diploma of Child Health; Australian Certificate of Civil Aviation Medicine; Graduate Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety Management; and a Masters Degree in Public Health. She is a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and holds a Fellowship in Advanced Rural General Practice.

Despite a wealth of health care knowledge and experience, which could and did open many opportunities for her throughout her career, it is still the diversity which comes with a career with the Flying Doctor that keeps Abby excited in her role.

"You're never just wearing one hat," she says. "You're always changing tack. One minute you're focused on primary health care or chronic disease management, and then an emergency occurs and suddenly you've got to go into a critical care emergency role. You need a huge amount of knowledge and very wide range of skills, and preferably a real depth of experience.

"I just couldn't see myself in a metropolitan hospital. It's the people and the absolute variety of health care scenarios you might find yourself in day-to-day which keeps my passion for the job and the Flying Doctor alive."

You have to be flexible - other people might call it resilient, but you must have the flexibility to work in a huge range of environments. You must be adaptable.



Support Services

Working behind the scenes at the Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section) is a dedicated team of support service personnel, ensuring our frontline teams can keep focused on their roles and continue providing the finest care to the furthest corner of the state. Whether it be in Finance, Human Resources, Clinical Governance, Corporate Services and Administration, Engineering and Maintenance, or Marketing and Fundraising, these team members are providing crucial services to ensure the Queensland Section's focus remains solely on delivering the best possible care to our patients.



MARK BELL – BASE SERVICES COORDINATOR, BRISBANE BASE

Mark Bell lives and breathes administration, so when he saw an advertisement for a Base Manager at RFDS Brisbane Base, he knew he would be the perfect fit.

“I had never worked for a not-for-profit organisation before and was at a stage in my life where I wanted to give back to the community. I wanted to make a difference in people’s lives through my work and this role provided the perfect opportunity,” Mark Said.

Mark, who is now the Base Services Coordinator, began with the RFDS just under 7 years ago and has cemented himself as an integral part of the Brisbane Base management team.

“It really is a diverse role. On a daily basis, I provide all forms of administrative and management support to

the various departments who work from the Base. In addition, I also manage the Base budgets, Base assets, site services and security and welcome the many visitors to the Base, just to mention a few” he said.

As Brisbane Base sits within the Brisbane Airport precinct, Mark is also a member of a number of Brisbane Airport committees, including the Airport Emergency Committee, Airport Security Consultative Group and the Wildlife Working Group.

“I am so proud of the team at the Base. They are a very close-knit group who support each other through the highs and lows. It is so satisfying to know that in some small way I have contributed to the lifesaving work of this magnificent organisation.”

[I had never worked for a not-for-profit organisation before and was at a stage in my life where I wanted to give back to the community.]



The Queensland Fleet

Beechcraft King Air B350C

Taking our service to the next level with the latest technology

MAXIMUM ALTITUDE

35,000 feet
(10,668m)

MAXIMUM SPEED

313 knots
(580km/h)

NUMBER IN FLEET

4*

The King Air B350C is the latest addition to the Queensland fleet and utilises the latest avionic technology to help our pilots fly safer, further, and faster than ever before. Configured with a three-stretcher solution, we can now transport patients non-stop from Cairns and Mount Isa to tertiary care in Brisbane. This new capability makes the B350 a vital part of our inter-hospital transfer service.

* The fourth King Air B350 will begin operational duty in early January 2018

King Air B200

When time is of the essence

MAXIMUM ALTITUDE

35,000 feet
(10,668m)

MAXIMUM SPEED

278 knots
(536km/h)

NUMBER IN FLEET

12

A highly functional and configurable aircraft, the King Air B200 allows us to transfer patients using a two-stretcher configuration. The B200's speed and agility lets us land on airstrips of only 1200 metres in length in any part of the state.

The B200, as well as being a retrieval aircraft, also flies our clinical teams to remote regions to deliver a range of primary health care services.

Cessna C208

Delivering primary health care to the top end

MAXIMUM ALTITUDE

25,000 feet
(7,620m)

MAXIMUM SPEED

186 knots
(338km/h)

NUMBER IN FLEET

2

Affectionately known as the "caravan" the Cessna c208 operates out of our Cairns base, transporting our primary health care teams to rural and remote communities in the Cape York region to deliver health care clinics and primary health care services.





Beechcraft King Air B350C

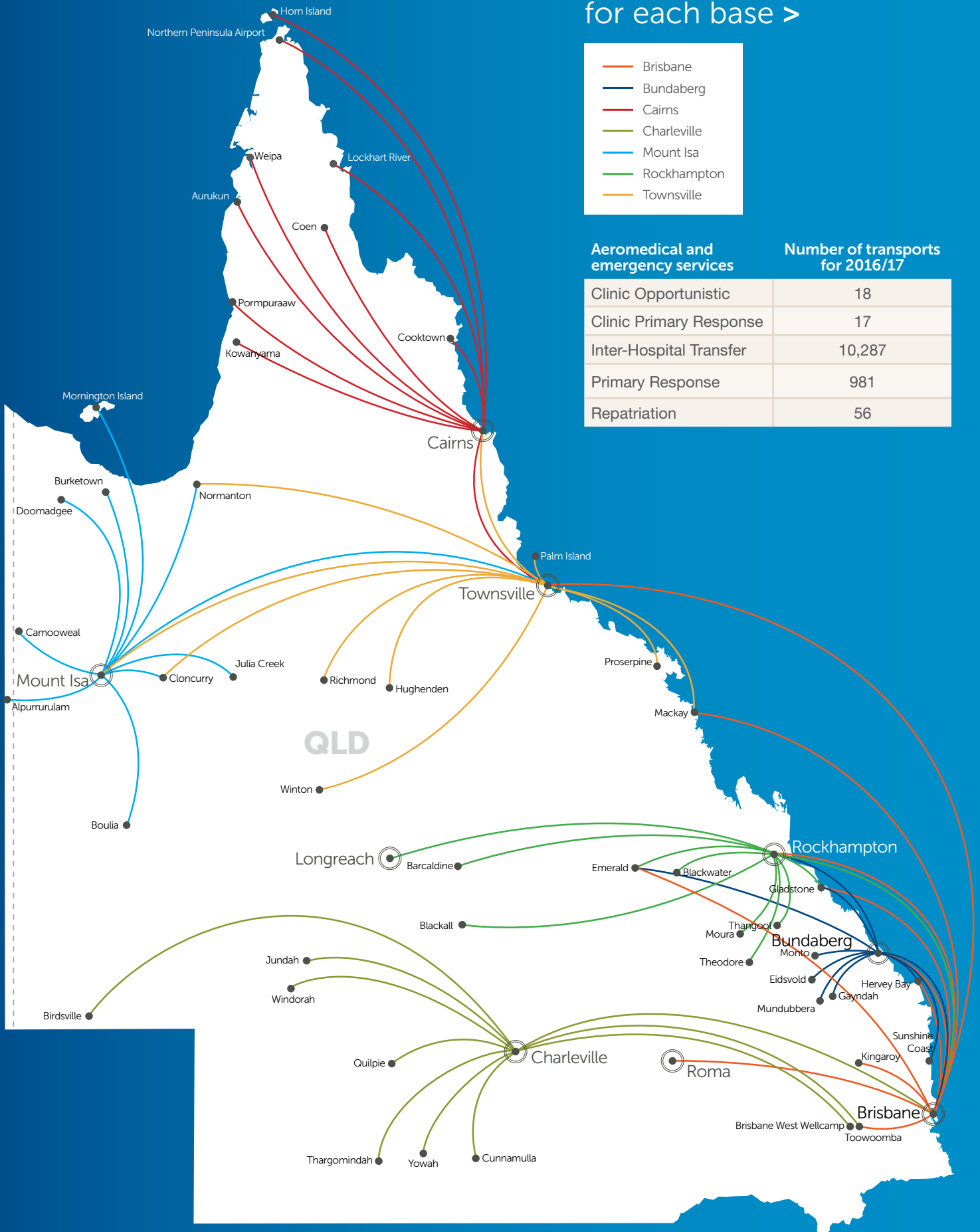


King Air B200

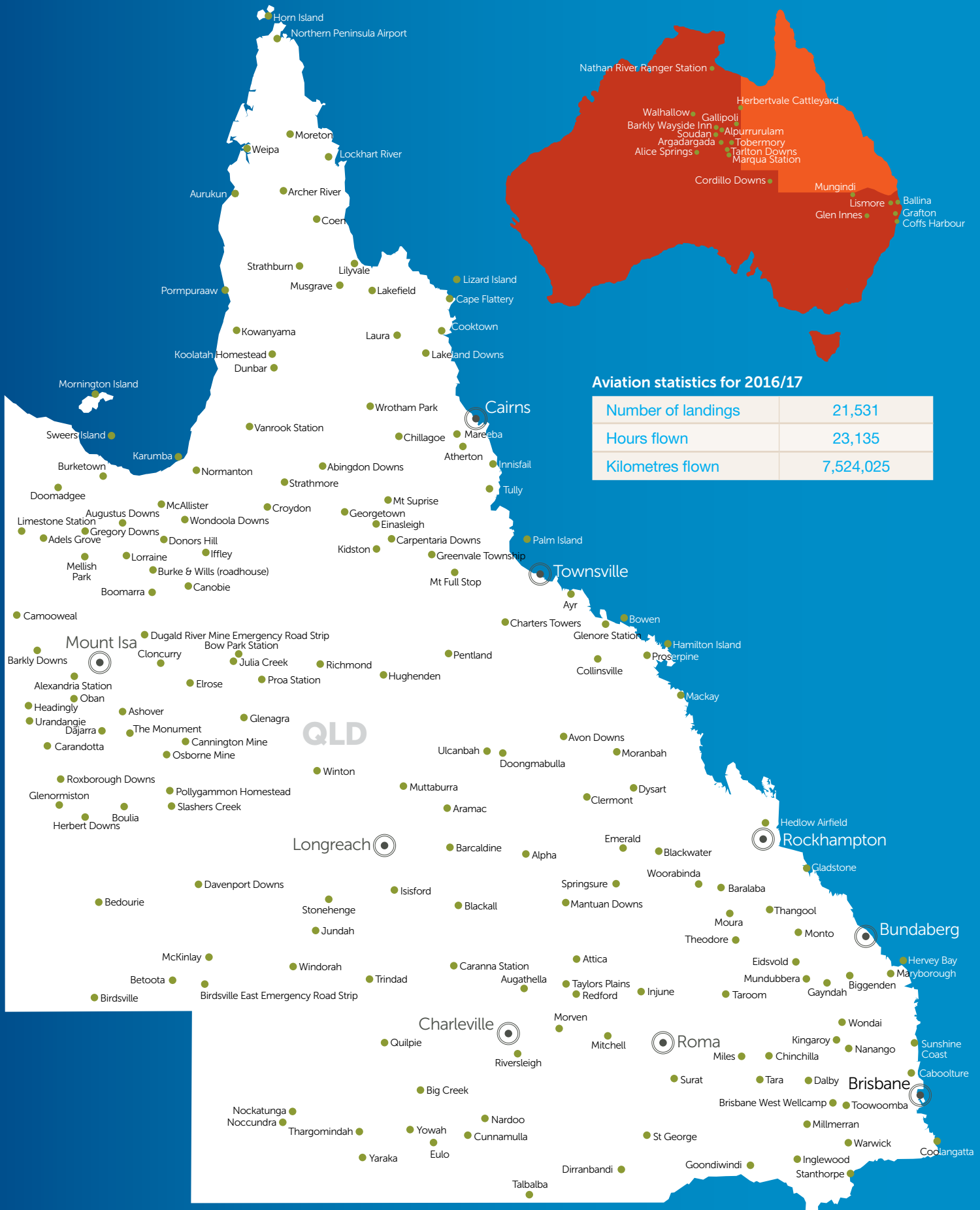


Cessna C208

Top 10 aeromedical evacuation flight paths for each base >



Locations we travelled to within Queensland >



Aviation statistics for 2016/17	
Number of landings	21,531
Hours flown	23,135
Kilometres flown	7,524,025

Our primary health care locations >

- Mobile dental unit
- Health promotion field days
- Child and family health services
- General practice services
- Drought wellbeing services
- Social and emotional wellbeing services

Dedicated to taking the finest care to the furthest corners, the RFDS travelled to over 85 rural and remote locations across Queensland to provide primary health care services to those in need.

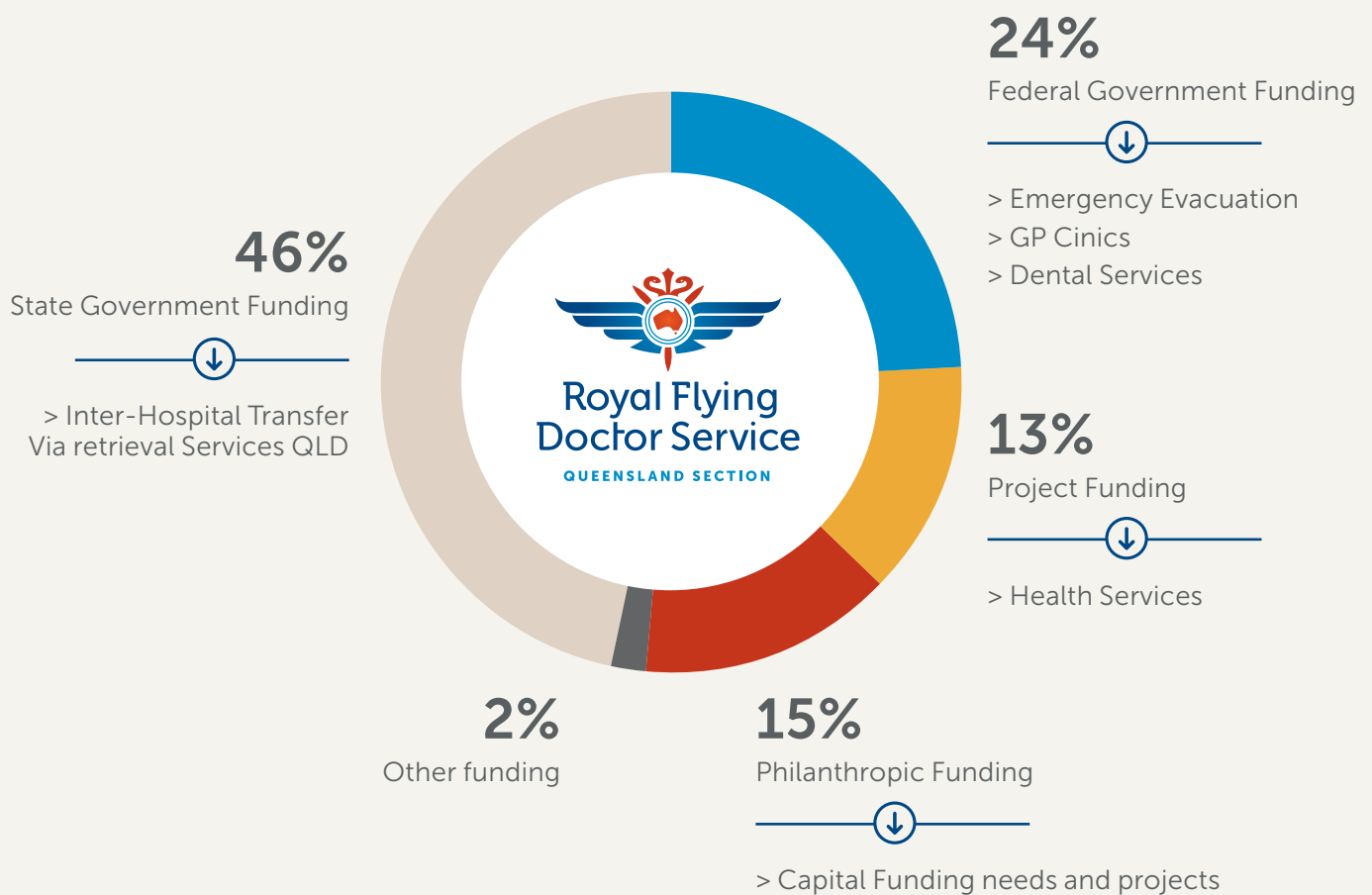




How the Flying Doctor is funded in Queensland

RFDS (Queensland Section) Funding Model

Gross Turnover \$98m







Our services

The Royal Flying Doctor Service has been delivering the finest care to the furthest corner in Queensland for 90 years. With our origins in aeromedical retrieval, we have grown throughout our rich history to now be considered one of Australia's finest primary health care providers.

GP Clinics

Rural and remote Queensland is characterised by small, widely dispersed populations. Because of their geography, these communities often lack easy access to primary health care services. The RFDS works to overcome this, providing regular fly-in fly-out GP, Nursing and allied health clinics to rural and remote communities.

**25,960 patients visited RFDS
primary health care clinics in the
2016/17 financial year.**

RFDS Medical Officers provide a comprehensive general practice service and facilitate all aspects of primary medical care, including Child & Maternal health and immunisations. Medical Officers are experienced in providing health services in a rural and remote setting and many have special interests and skills.

General practice clinics are held on a regular basis in remote locations; the frequency of visits depends on local needs. Medical Officers work closely with other health professionals outside of the RFDS to provide best quality care.



Aeromedical Evacuation

AEROMEDICAL RETRIEVAL

All RFDS bases in Queensland except Longreach and Roma provide an aeromedical and primary response service. This service includes the provision of primary responses and the transport of patients between hospitals (inter-hospital transfers). This financial year, the RFDS conducted 11,359 patient transports, including 981 primary responses and 10,287 inter-hospital transfers.

Our aircraft are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week; staffed with a Pilot, Flight Nurse and, if required, a medical officer.

Beechcraft King Air B200s and B350 aircraft are used for retrieval and inter-hospital transfer work in Queensland. All aircraft are pressurised and configured to resemble an intensive care unit. Our aircraft are fitted with either Lifeport or TAS systems, which incorporate oxygen, suction and power outlets, to act as a stretcher loading system that is fully compatible with road ambulances.

This financial year, the RFDS conducted 11,359 patient transports, including 981 primary responses and 10,287 inter-hospital transfers.

PRIMARY RESPONSE

A primary response involves the RFDS responding to a call from the scene. Often in remote areas, this call comes direct to the RFDS on its medical emergency lines. When 000 calls are received the RFDS is then contacted to respond. Primary responses occur when immediate first line treatment may not be available at the location of the patient.

The RFDS provides telehealth support while flying to the scene, before providing appropriate treatment upon arrival. The patient is then transported to the appropriate hospital if necessary.

Isolated properties, remote health clinics or the scene of an accident are examples of possible retrieval locations.

INTER-HOSPITAL TRANSFERS

Inter-hospital transfers involve the transport of patients between hospital facilities. This frequently occurs when surgery or specialist treatment care is required for the patient, which are not available at the originating facility. Transfer is therefore necessary to enable the patient to access the suitable specialty and acute care.

These transfers are coordinated through Retrieval Services Queensland, division of Queensland Health.









Mental Health

The RFDS is continuing to develop its mental health services to assist in addressing the health needs of those in rural and remote areas. The limited availability of services combined with a low help-seeking behaviour and stigmas associated with mental health issues, compound the problem even more than in urban areas.

Through the RFDS (Queensland Section) Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program, and a dedicated team of clinical psychologists operating out of the RFDS Longreach Base, we are able to provide psychological counselling services to rural and remote communities. Activities under this program form part of the RFDS primary health care response, with multiple professional disciplines bringing complimentary skills to the range of activities.

DROUGHT WELLBEING SERVICE

Since April 2015, RFDS (Queensland Section) has been leading the Drought Wellbeing Service across Queensland. This program, run through a partnership with Queensland Health's Mental Health and Other Drugs Branch, offers counselling and support to people living and working in areas impacted by drought. Through the Drought Wellbeing Service, qualified counsellors work alongside existing RFDS clinicians and attend established RFDS primary health care clinics. Counsellors are also available via telehealth or outreach sessions providing strategies

that can help in tough times, or an ear to listen to wellbeing concerns.

In 2016/17, the RFDS Mental Health program through its Social and Emotional Wellbeing Service, Drought Wellbeing Service and GP clinic service, delivered 16,736 occasions of service throughout Queensland.

headspace CAIRNS

The RFDS (Queensland Section) is carrying on our role as Lead Agency for headspace in Cairns headspace is responsible for the provision of youth mental health and counselling services in the region.

Since it was established in 2006, headspace has supported hundreds of thousands of young people and their families through direct clinical services and thousands more through health promotion and community awareness activities.

In 2016/17, the Centre delivered 5,155 mental health assessments and counselling sessions to young people aged between 12 and 25.

Group sessions are provided throughout the school terms, and include activities such as yoga, music, and drama. headspace clinicians also facilitate clinical groups for girls aged 12-14.



In 2016/17, the RFDS Mental Health program through its Social and Emotional Wellbeing Service, Drought Wellbeing Service and GP clinic service, delivered 16,736 occasions of service throughout Queensland.



Telehealth & Medical Chests

TELEHEALTH

RFDS Medical Officers provide a 24-hour medical consultation service to people living, working or travelling in remote and rural Queensland. As well as providing direct patient care services from its traditional Bases in Cairns, Mount Isa and Charleville, RFDS Medical Officers also give advice to rural doctors, remote area nurses, allied health staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, patients and carers that reside in these remote communities.

The RFDS is also currently taking part in a nationwide trial testing the effectiveness of videoconference GP consultations conducted from rural clinics. This service is being run as an additional service on top of the pre-existing, face-to-face clinic consultations.

12,459 people contacted the Flying Doctor through its Telehealth service in the 2016/17 financial year.

MEDICAL CHESTS

In Queensland, the RFDS is responsible for more than 1,200 medical chests located throughout the most remote parts of the state and extending into parts of the Northern Territory. The contents of the medical chests are prescribed remotely on site by RFDS Medical Officers. Patients can be treated for a range of conditions including antibiotics for infections, or pain relief in preparation for an emergency retrieval.

The RFDS runs the medical chest program in partnership with St John Ambulance Queensland to supply medicine and other items for the chests.





Field Days

Operating since 2001, the RFDS Field Day program was set up with the goal of promoting the benefits of health and wellbeing to people living in rural and remote areas of far north Queensland.

RFDS Field Days are conducted at about 18 cattle properties each year. Held in conjunction with a medical clinic, the Field Day programs cover topics such as first aid, diet and nutrition, mental health and exercise.

The RFDS Field Day team usually consists of a doctor, nurse, a mental health professional and a health promotion officer to ensure the information and care delivered at each event is relevant and worthwhile.

People travel up to three hours or more from neighbouring properties to attend the sessions.

But just as important as any of the services we provide, is the community aspect of the Field Days. People travel up to three hours or more from neighbouring properties to attend the sessions. And while the medical and health services we provide at our Field Days are invaluable, the rare opportunity for people to get together in a social setting, and overcome issues surrounding social isolation, is just another reason the RFDS Field Day program is such a highly treasured aspect of our service.







RFDS Dental Service

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (Queensland Section) has been delivering free oral health services to rural and remote communities since 2013, made possible through the generous financial support of the QCoal Group and QCoal Foundation. The service operates with a five-person dental team from a semi-trailer and includes two dental surgeries, a sterilisation area, a reception desk, kitchenette, and the latest panoramic dental x-ray equipment.

In its first four years, the QCoal Community Dental Service delivered more than \$4 million in dental treatment to more than 21 communities central west and north west Queensland.

In April this year, in welcomed news aimed at securing the dental service's future, the funding of this vital program transitioned to a federally funded program and was renamed the RFDS Dental Service, in recognition of the Commonwealth Government's support.

The Service travels a scheduled route each year and stays for a minimum of two weeks in each town. All treatments are provided free of charge.

The RFDS Dental Service would like to take the opportunity to thank its Founding Partners, QCoal Group, QCoal Foundation and the Australian Government for making access to these vital oral health services possible and for their continued interest.

Bringing a smile to rural and remote Queensland.

The RFDS Dental Service provides services including:

- > Oral health maintenance
- > X-Rays and extractions
- > Treatment for acute or pre-existing conditions
- > Treatments for gum disease
- > Referral to specialist dental services

For all RFDS Dental Service enquiries and bookings, call **1800 002 507**.

OUR FOUNDING PARTNERS



"If you start





something worthwhile - nothing can stop it."

REV. JOHN FLYNN, FOUNDER,
ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE



Built Mack tough



He was perfect in his mother's eyes, as was the pregnancy leading up to baby Mack's birth in Townsville. Mack's mother, Shelley, had very few issues, if any at all during her pregnancy. Unfortunately, things would take a twist for the little man only a day after he was born.

Shelley and her partner Brendan are from the small remote town of Boulia in western Queensland. Perched on the edge of the Simpson Desert, Boulia has a population just tipping 400 people. It's been a long-time recipient of RFDS services including a weekly GP clinic facilitated by the Flying Doctor's Mount Isa Base.

Shelley has been a client of the RFDS clinic in Boulia since she was a child. She knows the staff well. More so now since her recent pregnancy; her first.

There's often a real connection made between RFDS midwives and their patients in small clinics such as Boulia, as RFDS Primary Health Care Nurse, Mel Dunstan explains.

"One of the most rewarding parts about my job is developing that true level of trust with our patients, and I honestly think they would say the same thing," Mel says.

"You become a confidant for these people. It can be a really stressful time in their lives, and by being a person who they trust, you can help alleviate some of that uncertainty they might be carrying throughout their pregnancy."

Mel was Shelley's midwife in Boulia. A shared care service between the visiting doctor and the midwife, the antenatal care delivered to Shelley, and other mothers-to-be attending RFDS clinics, includes everything from the initial pregnancy test, to ultrasounds and measurements, blood tests, and comprehensive antenatal education.

"Unless there are significant complications, which can't be dealt with at the clinic, the only external referrals we usually do are for the crucial 12 and 20-week scans," Mel says.

Being an expectant mother in somewhere as isolated as Boulia throws up a few extra challenges, namely, where to actually give birth as the town simply does not have the facilities to safely accommodate the birth of a new child.

So it was that Shelley made the decision to give birth in Townsville.



"Ever since I found out I was pregnant, I knew I wanted to give birth in Townsville," Shelley says. "I have family and friends there, and I just felt comfortable knowing the level of care I would receive."

Leaving Boulia for Townsville one month before her due date, Shelley had no reason to believe there would be any complications with her baby boy.

Going into labour on Sunday and giving birth on the Monday, little Mack was born following a smooth, trouble free birth.

But it was when Mack began having trouble feeding, and issues arose around finding a strong pulse in his legs, that medical professionals at the Townsville Hospital began to suspect something might be seriously wrong.

"Initially, after he was taken to the special care unit, they suspected he might have a narrowing of the arch in his heart," Shelley says.

"One of the doctors noticed that while they were able to get a solid pulse from his arms, they could not get one from his legs, and what they could read was actually decreasing."

Scans confirmed what doctors had predicted - that there was in fact an issue with Mack's little heart.

I remember just wishing everything would go into fast forward and we would have him on the mend.

"I was heartbroken," Shelley says. "I didn't know what was wrong and I always naturally assume the worst. You think you've got this incredible, perfect little baby and when the doctors tell you something like this is wrong, and you know you personally can't do anything to fix it, it's just one of the worst feelings in the world. Nothing can prepare you for that."

In her moment of devastation, Shelley received some news that gave her a glimpse of hope.

Doctors called both Shelley and Brendan into a small room where they told the couple that Mack would be flown to Lady Cilento Children's Hospital in Brisbane on board a Royal Flying Doctor Service aircraft.

"I remember just wishing everything would go into fast forward and we would have him on the mend," she said.

"I couldn't stop crying. But it was amazing that in this moment of devastation, you have the reassurance that the RFDS is there right when you need them and they can get your baby where he needs to be to survive."

Shortly after receiving the news, the Flying Doctor and Townsville Hospital Neonatal Retrieval Team were tasked to carry out an emergency 1,300km transfer of Mack when he was just two days old. Before the Townsville Hospital Neonatal Retrieval Team and the RFDS Flight Nurse could depart, they first had to load Mack, the neonatal cot he was in and hundreds of kilos of life support equipment safely on board.

Shelley, still distraught and exhausted after giving birth, made the decision with her partner, Brendan, that he should be on the flight with Mack, and that she would be on the next flight down to meet them both in Brisbane.

Mack underwent surgery where doctors found that it was not an arch in his heart as first predicted. What doctors found was a massive blood clot – an extremely rare occurrence in babies, with only about 50 cases of this type reported worldwide since 2015.

The surgery to remove the clot was a success. Mack was lucky, and he was now on the mend.

After 10 weeks away from their small home town of Boulia, Shelley was anxious to get Mack home. There was an entire community keen to meet the little miracle. And he had another date with the RFDS.

The clinic which oversaw Shelley's entire pregnancy, would now also oversee both mum and bub's ongoing wellbeing. Postnatal care and child health is just another way the RFDS GP and nursing clinics make an impact in small communities like Boulia.



Mel has since made the move from the RFDS Mount Isa Base back to the Cairns Base where she is originally from. She said she had been in touch with Shelley to catch up a number of times since.

"What we offer is a continuity of care. As soon as they get back in to town we get in touch with them.

"The first six weeks is all about looking after yourself, your baby and your transition to parenthood. We try to help them in the transition period of becoming a parent. Things like working together as a couple looking after a baby, and holistic care including how to feed and bath your baby, the importance of tummy time, safe sleeping for baby and self-care for mums.

"Our clinics are a safe place for all of our patients. We reinforce that there are no silly questions, and a large focus of our education is designed around answering any of those questions before they are even asked. There is always the fear of the unknown for new mothers like Shelley, and she is incredible the way she got through such a tough situation as a first-time mother. I am just glad we were able to help her, and make things a little easier for her and her new family."





Clinical Governance and Training

With full health service accreditation under the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards achieved in May 2016, the Clinical Governance team has spent the year building upon this foundation by continuing to review its structure and processes; maintaining and monitoring quality systems in place; identifying areas for improvement and innovation; and implementing new safety and quality initiatives.

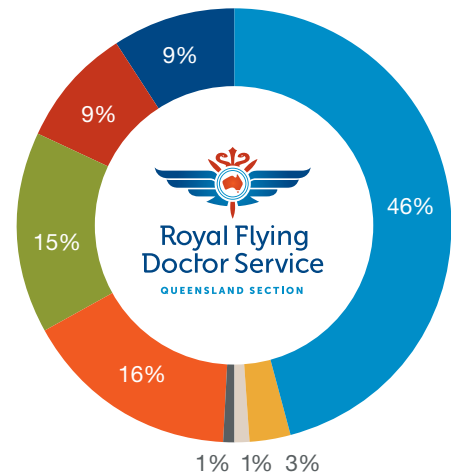
With new key members joining the team, including a Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer, time has been taken to review the clinical governance framework, committee structures, systems and processes which support the good governance of safe, high-quality care.

In recognition of the pivotal role our clinicians and multidisciplinary teams play in patient safety and quality improvement, the Clinical Governance team prioritised communication and engagement with all staff and key stakeholders.

CONSUMER FEEDBACK

Consumer feedback is used to improve services, provide insight into how to create a better experience for consumers as well as inform organisational decisions regarding consumer needs and service delivery requirements. A summary of consumer feedback received is outlined below.

- 46% - compliments (no further action required)
- 3% - treatment/care received
- 1% - professional conduct
- 1% - privacy issues
- 16% - general grievances
- 15% - administrative services
- 9% - communications
- 9% - access to services



STAR Program

The retrieval and transport of critically ill patients remains one of the most challenging aspects of modern medicine. There is a requirement for practitioners to possess a broad range of critical care skills and be able to apply them in a highly restrictive and unpredictable environment.

The RFDS Queensland Section has combined all of its expertise into creating the RFDS STAR Program – Specialised Training in Aeromedical Retrieval.

The STAR Program (which is open to both RFDS staff and external health professionals) is recognised as one of the

best scenario-based training experiences in the country, with attendees signing up from across Australasia.

The style of training is based on total immersion, with delegates being split into groups which have to overcome a range of realistic scenarios they might encounter during the course of their working day as an aeromedical service provider.

The STAR Program is a real feather in the RFDS hat, with Queensland Section's Clinical Training and Development team taking immense pride in developing and curating this internationally recognised course.

The key is teamwork, strong leadership and effective planning. Some teams are successful and some are not. But what is incredible is the trust that's built between people who did not know each other before beginning the course.

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How you can help

To help meet the costs associated with running a 24 hour emergency and comprehensive health care service, the RFDS relies on the generosity of individuals, community groups, business and the corporate sector as well as funding provided by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

The money donated to the RFDS helps to:

- > purchase and medically fit out aircraft
- > develop a range of outback and rural health initiatives

Please donate today:

- > Mail to 12 Casuarina Street, Brisbane Airport QLD 4008
- > Call us on 1300 669 569
- > Visit our website www.flyingdoctor.org.au/qld

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