

The official magazine of the Royal Flying Doctor Service
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Royal Flying Doctor Service
The furthest corner. The finest care.

AirDoctor



From the Chairman & CEO >



PETER DE CURE
Chairman

TONY VAUGHAN
Chief Executive

WE ARE PLEASED to introduce the November edition of *AirDoctor*. For the final edition of 2020, we have selected a spectacular image to front this magazine.

Created especially for the RFDS by Antakirinja/Yankunytjatjara/Kokatha artists Kelly Taylor and T'keyah Ware and launched this month in line with NAIDOC Week, the featured painting will be displayed at every Flying Doctor Base and Clinic across South Australia and the Northern Territory.

The design will also feature on our wonderful RFDS workforce in the form of polo shirts. You can read more about this launch and the story behind the artwork on page 8.

We also recently hosted our Annual General Meeting and reflected upon all that has happened in 2019/20. Over the past year, we have delivered more than 46,000 episodes of health care including:

- > 9,053 aeromedical evacuations;
- > 6,268 digital health consultations;
- > 10,425 face-to-face primary health consultations;
- > 1,111 face-to-face mental health consultations;
- > 647 face-to-face oral health consultations; and
- > 948 immunisations administered at remote clinics.

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a clear turning point for our service delivery in early 2020. However, we've been extremely proud of the efforts of our Flying Doctor team, demonstrating dedication and expertise not just in times of good health - but importantly in times of crisis.

In many ways, the pandemic has driven new thinking and new outcomes, many of which are now opening the door for permanent enhancements to our model of care.

Our digital health consultations doubled in the latter half of 2019/20 as we maintained a vital connection with isolated communities.

In primary health, our team combined telephone and videoconference calls with SMS alerts to keep patients on track with chronic disease management at home. This method, over a four-week period, delivered a 7.5% improvement in blood glucose levels for patients living with Type 2 diabetes.

We also worked very closely with our State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments to deliver "above and beyond" services including vaccination programs in locked-down communities, air freight of urgent pathology tests and cross-border transport of medical specialists.

At a national level, the Commonwealth Government supported the COVID-19 response with a \$2.7 million contribution. In addition, Mrs Gina Rinehart and the Rinehart Medical Foundation provided \$2 million directly to RFDS Central Operations for the purchase of additional life-saving equipment across all sites.

This generous investment has also provided seed funding for the development of a national RFDS *Electronic Health Record* – an innovation that will go a long way in bridging the tyranny of distance between patient and health provider. There is more detail about the new *Electronic Health Record* on page 10.

As always, we offer our heartfelt thanks to you for your ongoing support of our essential work. Your support means we remain response-ready in the air and on the ground, 24/7.

As Christmas and the New Year draws closer, we wish you and your loved ones a safe and enjoyable holiday period and we trust you will enjoy this month's *AirDoctor* read.

Peter De Cure *Tony Vaughan*

PETER DE CURE
Chairman

TONY VAUGHAN ASM
Chief Executive

AirDoctor is the official magazine of the
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The RFDS acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.

OUR COVER: *RFDS Flight Journey Line*, an original artwork by Kelly Taylor and T'keyah Ware.



Flying Doctor lifeline to station life >

Clifton Hills Station Manager Peter Nunn with his wife Fiona and their children Beau and Saxby.

LYING ON A CLAYPAN after being flung from a motorbike on the Clifton Hills Station in the far north-east corner of South Australia, station manager Peter Nunn knew the RFDS was on its way.

"I was coming in and out of consciousness, I'd fractured my skull in two places, fractured my neck in two places, broken nine ribs and one of my lungs was punctured," Peter says about his accident last August.

"They got me into Mount Isa and when I got there, I had respiratory failure. I was put into an induced coma and then flown onto Townsville," he says.

"I've only just been given full clearance to get back to work. It was really good when I heard the Flying Doctor team was on the way.

"They are calm people — when you are busted up and they arrive, they are so cool and calm. It really sets your mind at ease."

Peter and his wife Fiona along with their two children, Beau, 10, and Saxby, three, live on the second largest cattle station in the world, stretching across 1.65 million hectares on the Birdsville Track about 820 kilometres north-east of Adelaide.

Their isolation means they know the value of the Flying Doctor with Peter saying he's been a fan from childhood. He can remember being at a

When you live out here, you know two things for sure – the summer's going to be hot and the Flying Doctor will come when you call them.

Peter Nunn, Clifton Hills Station

RFDS rodeo fundraiser in Queensland organised by his father when he was 10 years old.

"My Dad was organising the fundraiser and I fell off a fence and broke my arm. Dad said we couldn't get the Flying Doctor out here for this given we're raising money for the service, so my mum drove me a few hours to the hospital," Peter says with a laugh.

It was in 2016 when Peter experienced his second life-changing encounter with the RFDS. He and station hand Jarrod Coulthard were driving back to camp at Clifton Hills Station when their four-wheel-drive blew a tyre and rolled several times.

Jarrod was knocked unconscious after being flung from the vehicle and ended up trapped underneath the wreckage.

"Luckily, there were some blokes working on the road nearby and they came to help. We found a chain and pulled the vehicle off of him and he was in a crevice and was OK. He had concussion and a broken collarbone," Peter says.

It was only after helping Jarrod that Peter realised he was not in a good way. It turned out Peter had fractured three vertebrae in his back and had broken ribs. The two were flown to the Royal Adelaide Hospital for treatment.

"My brother was coming behind in the truck and when he saw us lying together on the ground and only saw our feet sticking out, he thought the worst. It was really good when we heard the Flying Doctor was on the way. It really set our minds at ease," Peter says.

Clifton Hills Station also has a RFDS Medical Chest so Flying Doctor crew can help those living on the station treat injuries or illnesses over the telephone. The Nunn family recently used the Medical Chest to treat a burn on son Beau's leg. Regular 'fly-in' health clinics delivered by the RFDS Port Augusta primary care team are also conducted on the station.

"It's just good peace of mind knowing they are there. We're pretty isolated and when the Flying Doctor comes out, it feels a little less isolated," Peter says.



Flying across a pandemic >

AS AUSTRALIANS BEGAN grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down the nation, the RFDS donned protective masks and kept in the air to save lives across the country.

“Most people were working out how to run away but we had to work out how to run toward it safely,” Chief Executive of RFDS Central Operations Tony Vaughan ASM says.

The service pulled together a national RFDS COVID-19 Taskforce when the first whispers of a global pandemic emerged in February and Mr Vaughan was asked to lead the response.

From where Doctor Jessica Martyn was based, finishing her training as a specialist general practitioner with the Australian Defence Force, she could see the Flying Doctor stepping up as the impacts of the pandemic spread.

“There was important forward planning for all scenarios of how COVID-19 could impact rural and remote patients from cattle stations to Indigenous communities,” Dr Martyn says.

“And there was dramatic upskilling of clinicians for the worst-case scenario.”

It was this coordinated frontline response that motivated Dr Martyn to join the Flying Doctor team and ensure she was on the frontline dealing with the virus.

She was among two new doctors, two nurses and four pilots employed by RFDS across SA/NT with Commonwealth Government COVID-19 response funding as cases spread across Australia.

First steps for the new national response involved an immediate centralised purchasing of vital PPE so hundreds of thousands of essential protective masks and gowns could be stockpiled to ensure RFDS staff could continue providing essential health care to the country’s furthest corners.

In February, the RFDS became the first aeromedical organisation to manage a COVID-19 case on Australian soil as it helped airlift infected patients from the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship in Darwin to cities across the nation.

💬 **Most people were working out how to run away from COVID-19 but we had to work out how to run toward it safely.**💬

Tony Vaughan ASM, RFDS Central Operations

As commercial flights around the country were grounded by the pandemic, the RFDS stepped in to also transport vital pathology tests for health authorities, along with flying important medical specialists to patients throughout the country.

A standby aircraft charter service was rapidly established for oil and gas and mining companies to swiftly assist with moving suspected COVID-19 employees from remote locations.

Mr Vaughan said a new specialist cleaning team was employed to free up clinical staff from comprehensive aircraft cleaning in retrieval turn arounds.

And a \$2 million donation by Mrs Gina Rinehart and the Rinehart Foundation helped with the immediate purchase of extra vital medical equipment including heart monitors, defibrillators, ventilators and IV infusion pumps across SA/NT aeromedical bases and remote clinics.

In the space of five months our teams airlifted 69 confirmed or suspected COVID-19 patients in SA and NT but also continued to deliver vital emergency and primary health care to remote and rural communities.

“The efforts of Steve Cameron in leading the Incident Management Team (IMT) and Dr Mardi Steere in leading the Medical Retrieval Service during this pandemic has been exemplary,” Mr Vaughan says.

That care included a doubling of digital primary and mental health consultations, a series of mental health events held on large screens in remote communities and a new alert system to help RFDS primary care patients manage chronic disease.

“The Flying Doctor maintained its mantle of care despite numerous challenges in crossing borders, visiting remote communities and being hyper aware of the impacts of social contact,” Mr Vaughan says.

Supporting our communities >

WHEN THE COVID-19 pandemic grounded commercial flights earlier this year, the Flying Doctor stepped up to transport patients, medical specialists – even students – across the border between South Australia and the Northern Territory.

“Every week for weeks and weeks, we flew people between Darwin and Adelaide for vital medical appointments — cardiac patients, cancer patients, those needing an urgent MRI,” RFDS Darwin Acting Operations Manager Sam Bennett says.

“These were patients who would normally have been able to take a commercial flight.

“Our crews were also able to transport a COVID-checked escort with these patients, as border closures meant there was no other way their loved ones could accompany them.”

During this time, the Flying Doctor also helped transfer third-party medical specialists to Alice Springs and pathology tests from remote communities for SA Health and NT Health.

Our teams partnered with SA Health to administer flu vaccinations in 11 Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) communities during lockdown.

And the Flying Doctor recognised COVID-19’s unprecedented impact on isolated communities and further adapted its response to support healthier and happier Australians no matter where they live.

This led the RFDS to assist Top End country men and staff from the innovative Indigenous-owned and run health service Purple House in Darwin End to Arnhem Land to attend a funeral of an elder on Elcho Island.

Then, in late April, the Flying Doctor worked with a team of school administrators, the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association and South Australian Police to transport stranded students across state lines shut down by the coronavirus.

“We received a call from Deep Well Station near Alice Springs and were advised that station families had exhausted all avenues in finding a

way to get students back to boarding school,” Ms Bennett says.

Acknowledging the importance of supporting rural families, a commuter RFDS aircraft was organised to airlift nine remote students to Adelaide to resume their schooling.

RFDS Executive General Manager of Marketing & Stakeholder Relations Charlie Paterson said the Flying Doctor started building its aeromedical capability to respond to COVID-19 in January, while also maintaining its non-aeromedical aircraft generally used for health clinics.

“Lending our capacity to assist our health partners and communities outside our day-to-day role during this crisis has been something we’ve been very proud of,” he says.

“In many ways, it has meant the continuation of vital health services as well as backing our communities as they transition back to ‘normal’.”

In the meantime, the RFDS continued to airlift eight Territorians and 15 South Australians every day for lifesaving and specialist medical care.

Miner stockpile solution >

As COVID-19 created new demands on the RFDS, global mining company BHP stepped in to deliver a generous donation of important medical PPE from its Olympic Dam site in South Australia.

Boxes of masks, face shields and surgical gloves were delivered to the national stockpile warehouse at RFDS Victoria and is now being used by the Flying Doctor throughout Australia.

As part of its *Vital Resources Fund* initiative to support communities

during COVID-19, BHP has also funded a 12-month Occupational Health & Safety Specialist position with RFDS Central Operations based in Adelaide.

With infection and disease control one of several key focus areas, the newly created role will maintain the RFDS Safety Management System during these challenging periods, creating a dedicated resource to enhance the health and safety outcomes for our people, patients and communities.





IGA add piece to the fundraising puzzle >

IGA Glenelg East store owner Greg Woods and RFDS Community Fundraising Specialist Kristen Newlyn.

INDEPENDENT GROCERS OF Australia (IGA) stores are putting the pieces together for a strong November fundraising campaign for the RFDS.

A specially designed children's jigsaw puzzle will be on hand at 81 IGA stores throughout South Australia and the Northern Territory for customers who donate \$2 or more to support the Flying Doctor.

You only have to drop a coin into collection boxes or use one of our new "Tap and Go" machines being rolled out in stores to get an opportunity to put the fundraising puzzle together.

Greg and Leah Woods have owned the Glenelg East IGA store in Adelaide for the past decade and are looking forward to being part of the campaign after adding a collection box to their check-out just over a year ago.

"Our customers are generous supporters and the collection box fills quickly," Greg says.

The November event also cements a growing relationship between the community-focused IGA stores and the RFDS.

In May last year, the Royal Flying Doctor Service Central Operations unveiled its IGA branded aeromedical aircraft in recognition of a new, three-year major sponsorship of RFDS in South Australia and the Northern Territory.

It's an alignment of two great brands that sit at the heart of communities across Australia.

Matt Roberts, Metcash

The \$7 million flying intensive care unit, VH-FVE (Foxtrot-Victor-Echo), is one of more than 75 RFDS aircraft spread across the country.

While all IGA stores are independently owned and operated, Metcash owns the overarching IGA brand.

Metcash General Manager SA/NT Matt Roberts says the connection between IGA and the Flying Doctor was strong.

"It's an alignment of two great brands that sit at the heart of communities across Australia – you can find an IGA store in most of the remote and regional towns that the RFDS fly into day in and day out," Mr Roberts says.

"The partnership works seamlessly with IGA's values, which include giving back to the local community, especially at a grass roots level. Collection boxes and the jigsaws in stores will help to keep RFDS front of mind in the public's eyes and raise much needed funds."

Corporate sponsorship and funds raised through the major partnership by IGA are being directed to the RFDS capital-raising program for the replacement of new aircraft and medical equipment. There are also two IGA-badged full-sized aeromedical training simulators in SA and NT which are used by RFDS crews for training and education, as well as community engagement at public events.

Senex gives one million reasons to celebrate >



SA Mining and Energy Minister the Hon Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP, RFDS Chairman Peter de Cure, and Senex Energy Managing Director and CEO Ian Davies at the sponsorship announcement.

VALUED CORPORATE PARTNER Senex Energy has extended its support for the RFDS Central Operations to \$1 million with a further three-year major sponsorship.

The energy company is making another \$300,000 commitment to support the ongoing operation of aircraft like the Senex-badged "flying intensive care unit" that transports up to 1,000 patients a year from remote regions to Adelaide's major hospitals.

Senex's contribution ensures 24/7 support for employees who work about 1,000 kilometres north of Adelaide in the Cooper-Eromanga Basin, as well as those living in and visiting rural and remote South and Central Australia.

The petroleum explorer and producer's partnership with the RFDS began in 2013 and, with this further three-year agreement, now totals more than \$1 million.

Senex Managing Director Ian Davies said the oil and gas industry had a responsibility to help people and sustain communities in areas where it operated.

"All of us at Senex are excited to be continuing our support of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in bringing world-class medical care to remote communities," Mr Davies says.

All of us at Senex are excited to be continuing our support of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in bringing world-class medical care to remote communities.

Ian Davies, Senex Energy

"This refreshed partnership will bring to almost a decade our joint efforts, which have resulted in more than 5,200 aeromedical missions and 6,500 patients airlifted so far.

"We thank the Flying Doctor for its unwavering dedication and service to the wellbeing of people in the Outback, including our own workers in the Cooper Basin."

Senex also contributes to the *Cooper Medivac 24* helicopter, which can transfer landholders, tourists and employees – including at night –

from remote locations to rendezvous with fixed-wing RFDS aircraft at the nearest airstrip.

The Senex-badged aircraft is one of 75 the RFDS operates and has flown 420,000km flown throughout South Australia and beyond in its past three years including making 17 COVID-19 transfers this year requiring comprehensive PPE protocols.

It covers 52 country towns and outback locations and has been responsible for three interstate transfers of critically ill infants for life-saving cardiac surgery.

RFDS Central Operations Chairman Peter de Cure thanked Senex Energy for its valuable contribution.

"The RFDS is proud to deliver more than 50,000 episodes of health care throughout the Northern Territory and South Australia every year — that's someone every 10 minutes," Mr de Cure says.

"The impact of Senex's support will reach far and wide, delivering long-lasting benefits to our rural and remote communities.

"The ongoing support from the entire community – including our public donors, community fundraisers, volunteers and corporate partners like Senex Energy – is critical to ensuring we continue to deliver the finest care to the furthest corner."



South Australian Aboriginal artists Kelly Taylor and her daughter T'keyah Ware

First Nation art for Flying Doctor >

ARTWORK CREATED BY South Australian Aboriginal artists Kelly Taylor and her daughter T'keyah Ware adorn a new range of RFDS uniforms, reflecting our role in and connection with indigenous communities.

Their striking original artwork titled *RFDS Flight Journey Line* was unveiled at the Flying Doctor's Adelaide Base to celebrate NAIDOC Week in November, and the design has been replicated on a special uniform to be worn by the RFDS Central Operations workforce.

The project marks a powerful connection between the Flying Doctor and the Antakirinja/ Yankunytjatjara/Kokatha artists forged 18 years ago.

"The RFDS has a special place in our family's heart as I have been flown out with RFDS from Ceduna to Adelaide with two of my pregnancies in 1999 and 2002," Kelly says.

"I went into emergency at the Ceduna Hospital when I was pregnant with T'keyah and was then flown to the Royal Adelaide Hospital. I really appreciate everything the Flying Doctor does for the community."

Kelly tells how the artwork's storyline represents the Flying Doctor's role within remote South Australia and Northern Territory where the service flies 24/7 to some of our country's most remote communities and towns.

"They have a special team of health care specialists to help our most at-risk people and get them to the larger hospitals to receive the best care possible," Kelly says.

The RFDS has a special place in our family's heart.

Kelly Taylor, Ceduna

The artwork shows a blue line tracing an aircraft's journey past waterholes, remote communities and towns along with showing tracks and trails of the RFDS "past, present and future".

"Footprints represent the RFDS specialist health care teams in different remote communities and towns," Kelly says.

While blue dots represent the ocean and earth colours, the land.

Three generations have had a hand in the artwork produced by the First Nation artists with Kelly saying it was her late grandmother Millie Taylor (nee Lennon) who will always be her greatest influence and who first encouraged her to paint.

"My Nana Millie was my teacher, she always encouraged me to paint and passed many ancient stories down along the way," Kelly says.

The RFDS called for expressions of interest earlier this year from South Australian or Northern Territorian Indigenous artists interested in a collaboration to create a bespoke design for a new range of staff apparel.

The mother and daughter artists create their pieces at home and sell their work on Facebook under Kelly and T'Keyah Aboriginal Fine Art.

Held this year on November 8-15, NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recognising Indigenous culture and history >

A PORT AUGUSTA staff member first came up with an idea to create a special Flying Doctor uniform to celebrate Indigenous culture and history last year, eventually leading to the unveiling of the beautiful new artwork by Premier Steven Marshall as part of our NAIDOC Week celebrations.

Many were particularly drawn to artists Kelly Taylor and T'keyah Ware's story about the Flying Doctor having a "special place in our family's heart" after being flown to the Royal Adelaide Hospital from Ceduna during Kelly's pregnancy.

I know our new shirts will be embraced and worn with pride by all our staff.

Mandy Smallacombe, RFDS Manager Primary Health Care

"It would be absolutely amazing to have an opportunity to create a special design recognising all the hard work from RFDS and team," the mother and daughter said in their submission.

Mandy Smallacombe, RFDS Manager Primary Health Care and RAP Committee Member, says the bespoke uniform design has been an important project.

Health clinicians entering and engaging with Aboriginal communities through remote South Australia and Central Australia needed to deepen their understanding about diversity and Aboriginal cultural groups, she says.



Senior Flight Nurse Michael Penno in the new uniform.

"Strengthening our relationships with First Nation leaders and community members by leading community consultation, communication and consent are valuable steps towards a collaborative and trusted partnership in improving health outcomes," she says.

"I am really excited to have a visual commitment of our pledge to cultural safety. I know our new shirts will be embraced and worn with pride by all our staff, and I can't wait to see the faces of our remote community members on their 'maiden flight'."

As a key provider of health services in rural and remote Australia, the RFDS is also committed to the "Close the Gap" campaign to improve both health outcomes and access to health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The RFDS identifies that enhanced cultural competency of current staff, as well as training, employment, and support of more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in health and aviation roles is necessary for the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to improve.



RFDS Flight Journey Line The storyline

- 1 RFDS flight path
- 2 Waterholes
- 3 Remote communities and towns
- 4 Tracks and trails of the RFDS, present and future
- 5 RFDS clinicians visiting remote communities
- 6 Remote people being cared for by the RFDS
- 7 Representative of the ocean
- 8 Representative of the land



Technology to support better health >

Damien Heath, Head of Flying Operations, with VH-FZQ after it conducted its first remote landing on the Inverway Station, Victoria River District, Northern Territory.

DIGITAL PATIENT MEDICAL bags will soon arm the Flying Doctor with lifesaving technological support for patients in rural and remote Australia, thanks to a generous donation from Mrs Gina Rinehart and the Rinehart Medical Foundation. Work is underway to provide the service with a new national RFDS Electronic Health Record so doctors and nurses across Australia can more accurately diagnose and treat patients.

“The new web-based software application will have offline capability and can be used in the air or on the road to help clinical teams track and service patients,” RFDS Central Operations Chief Executive Tony Vaughan ASM says.

“This bespoke medical record will be digitally compatible with every state health and hospital system, the emergency ambulance service and our own RFDS remote primary health care service, so there is accurate, portable access to patient records of diagnosis and treatment,” he says.

“It means ‘digital patient medical bags’ can be assigned to flights, and the status of form-completion and record finalisation can be tracked.”

The project is focused on more seamless care for patients and better health outcomes, Mr Vaughan says, who is leading the national project board to build the Electronic Health Record.

We are honoured to have both *RFDS Medi-Jet 24s* badged with the S. Kidman & Co logo.

RFDS Central Operations Chief Executive Tony Vaughan ASM

Earlier this year, Mrs Gina Rinehart and Rinehart Medical Foundation supported our COVID-19 surge capability through the generous provision of \$6 million in funds to the RFDS – \$2 million of which allocated to RFDS Central Operations (serving SA/NT).

The investment provided seed funding to develop the bespoke national medical record along with buying important additional life-saving equipment across all sites, including ventilators, heart monitors, ventilators, iSTAT machines, IV infusion pumps, Automated External Defibrillators and telehealth hubs.

It also followed outback icon S. Kidman & Co expanding and extending its \$1 million-plus ‘Jet Partner’ sponsorship of RFDS Central Operations for another four years.

“The impact of S. Kidman & Co’s tangible contribution to our work is far reaching, and we

are honoured to have both *RFDS Medi-Jet 24s* badged with the S. Kidman & Co logo for the next four years,” Mr de Cure says.

The latest in aeromedical technology, the new *RFDS Medi-Jet 24* (VH-FZQ) arrived in July.

Its arrival doubles the RFDS’ jet power across Australia’s central corridor, achieving a long-term vision to provide dedicated aeromedical jet capability in both the Northern Territory and South Australia.

“This new *RFDS Medi-Jet 24* – our second purpose-built aeromedical jet – will be dedicated to serve the Territory, to care for all Territorians for decades to come,” RFDS Central Operations Chairman, Peter de Cure, said during the unveiling in Darwin.

“At a cost of \$14 million, this innovation in aeromedical care was financed solely by the RFDS’ own capital-raising through fundraising, bequests, corporate sponsorship and donations from all corners of the community.”

One of the nation’s largest beef producers with pastoral properties across three states and the Northern Territory, S. Kidman & Co is owned by Australian Outback Beef, a joint venture of Hancock Prospecting and Shangai CRED.

 **Crafted in Switzerland**



PC-24
THE CRYSTAL CLASS



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From outback strips to city airports, the Pilatus PC-12 has operated day and night for over twenty five years to keep the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) in the air. As an operator of the new PC-24, the RFDS Central Operations continues its tradition as a loyal and valuable member of the Pilatus family. We are all extremely proud to be associated with the RFDS and their provision of the finest care to the furthest corners with our aircraft – yesterday, today and in the future

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Hospital flight inspires new recruit >

The new oral health team getting to know the Outback.



COURTNEY WOODS BELIEVES her new job as an Oral Health Assistant was meant to be after first connecting with the RFDS when she fell from a horse aged 14.

The keen horsewoman was airlifted to the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide from Kadina with a suspected spinal injury and has been a keen supporter of the service ever since.

"I'd fallen from a horse during a novelty racing event and I was in agony. When the plane from the RFDS arrived, it was amazing — the nurse was so calm and helped with the pain," Courtney says.

"I've always loved the Flying Doctor but after this experience, I thought it was even more amazing."

When the trained dental nurse saw an opening for an Oral Health Assistant based in Port Augusta advertised earlier this year, she immediately applied.

"When this job came up, it just seemed perfect. I had always wanted to work remotely, I've worked on a station in the Gawler Ranges and this is the most perfect job I could have asked for," Courtney, who lives in Jamestown, says.

Two months into the job and Courtney has already helped launch the Flying Doctor's new Leigh Creek Oral Health Service and worked with patients in Andamooka in outback South Australia.

💬 When this job came up, it just seemed perfect. 💬

Courtney Woods, RFDS Oral Health Assistant

She says it's a unique role, given equipment required for an entire dental clinic needs to be packed and ready to travel to remote areas by vehicle or plane for every visit. The team also works closely with communities around educating patients about better oral health care.

Now Courtney is learning more every day, building on her long connection with the Flying Doctor supporting her, along with friends and family members — and having organised ute musters and rodeo events where fundraising was directed to the Service.

"There's such a strong appreciation for the Royal Flying Doctor Service in the country. Everyone realises if something really bad happens that a plane ride to hospital in Adelaide could make all the difference," she says.

Courtney is one of two new Remote Area Oral Health Assistant recruits to have joined the service in the past few months.

New service making Leigh Creek locals smile >



New Remote Area Oral Health Assistant recruits Courtney Woods (left) and Jyssicah Kramer in Leigh Creek.

AS COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS temporarily closed dental services across the nation, the Flying Doctor worked on opening a new one in the South Australian outback town of Leigh Creek.

The Oral Health team launched its newest service in September from a van based at Leigh Creek Area School.

"When we advertised that we were visiting Leigh Creek, the entire week was booked out in two days," RFDS Senior Dentist Vaibhav Garg says.

"Even though patients really wanted to visit the dentist, they may have found it difficult due to distance, finances, not being able to find a babysitter for an entire day, or may not have had the knowledge to assess when they should attend."

It has been a rapidly changing time for the RFDS Remote Oral Health Care team, which has continued to assist patients in remote areas despite COVID restrictions.

In the past year, the RFDS has held 647 scheduled dental consultations across six remote communities, including in Mutitjulu — the second established service location in the Northern Territory.

The Country SA Primary Health Network supported the roll-out of the RFDS's first telehealth service for dental care. While not replacing hands-on treatment, it allowed the team to maintain connections with the communities it visits.

Pre-COVID-19, services were also significantly expanded in Marree to meet increased demand from the local community living around outback SA's Birdsville Track.

Working from clinics, vans and even landing strips, the RFDS Remote Oral Health Care team has shifted its treatments from emergency-focused treatments to a more preventative program including proactively targeting at-risk patients living with diabetes and chronic disease.

"In many communities, we are finding increasing demand for our service. It's much more than dealing with immediate dental problems - it's about preventive dentistry and the children learning about caring for their teeth and healthy food choices," Dr Garg says.

"We are now finding parents are wanting their children to learn more about oral health. The team teaches kids to sing the Tooth Fairy song and to play the 'Happy Tooth, Sad Tooth' game to engage children about taking better care of their health.

"We would like to create partnerships with schools to start a new toothbrushing program where we will encourage children to decorate a bag to keep their toothbrush so they can clean teeth at school."

💬 When we advertised that we were visiting Leigh Creek, the entire week was booked out in two days. 💬

Dr Vaibhav Garg, RFDS Senior Dentist

Protecting patients from rough weather >

COMMUNITY BANK MOUNT Gambier & District, part of Bendigo Bank, has been recognised for its generous \$50,000 contribution supporting the Flying Doctor's new Patient Transfer Facility at Mount Gambier.

The facility – the first of its kind in regional South Australia – is vastly improving care and response times for hundreds of critically ill patients in South Australia's Lower South East.

Half the hangar has been refurbished into a patient care facility for RFDS and SAAS MedSTAR crews to more safely stabilise a deteriorating patient prior to flight, while the other half remains a traditional hangar for aircraft parking and patient loading in inclement weather.

Patients previously were transferred onto aircraft directly from the tarmac at all hours of the day and in all weather extremes.

RFDS crews managed 239 patients from Mt Gambier over the first 100 days of operation of the new facility, of which it rained 43 days.

This facility gives families great peace of mind that their loved ones are being well cared for as they start their journey through to Adelaide," bank Branch Manager Tracy Coop says.

Simpson Desert Bike Challenge >

BIKES SPECIALLY DESIGNED for crossing desert terrain have been setting off to raise money for the Royal Flying Doctor Service for the past 30 years but sadly, this year, COVID-19 stopped the annual cycling challenge event in its red sandy tracks.

Over the years, the event has raised over \$300,000 in much-appreciated support for the valuable work undertaken by the RFDS.

The good news is that organisers are now ramping up for a return in the event's 35th year – so make a note in the diary and sign up for 2021.



Spring OZ Outback Odyssey >

AFTER STALLING IN July this year, the annual OZ Outback Odyssey event managed to draw drivers itching to take their old vehicles out of the garage for a spin in October.

While the event initially intended sending its drivers and their 30 years and older cars from Adelaide to Broome, the event was pared back with drivers instead travelling within SA from the Barossa Valley through the Gawler Ranges to the West Coast and Port Lincoln.

Unseasonal wet weather made it a challenging (but fun) trip to the seafood capital of Australia via a range of interesting and challenging tracks – raising an impressive \$183,650 for the RFDS, including a generous \$100,000 donation from the Rogers family.



Bay to Birdwood >

GENEROUS VINTAGE CAR enthusiasts supported the RFDS during the recent Bay to Birdwood historic vehicle rally. The event – celebrating its 40th year - raised \$13,680 for the RFDS, its 2020 official charity.

In a fitting tribute, the RFDS also revealed it had found two rusty old replicas of the battered Dodge Buckboard the service's founder, the Reverend John Flynn, used to travel around the Outback.

One vehicle was rescued from an Adelaide Hills paddock by RFDS Central Operations Chief Executive and car restoration enthusiast Tony Vaughan ASM – while the other Dodge Tourer was previously owned by former RFDS doctor Ashley Thomas and is now stowed at a former service base in Port Augusta.



Steps Up raises \$10,000 >

A TRUSTY TEAM of walkers, runners and cyclists rallied to traverse the country in support of the RFDS throughout October.

The inaugural *Steps Up* fundraiser attracted a passionate band of young and old supporters to the 31-day challenge where participants tracked their daily steps online to contribute to a 17,446-kilometre 'virtual' journey around Australia.

Team *Steps Up* set off on 1 October, heading south from Adelaide to Mount Gambier and onwards in their bid to return to the Adelaide base by the month's end – collecting valuable donations along the way.

Give a life saving gift this Christmas >



OUTBACK SONGMAN – Audiobook by Ted Egan

Ted Egan is the quintessential bush storyteller. He has rubbed shoulders with some of the best-known and least-known of his countrymen and women and he can wring a heart-wrenching song out of a beer carton. In *Outback Songman*, Ted recounts the story of his rich and extraordinary life.

\$29.95 (includes P&H within Australia)

Visit our Doc Shop to see our full range of fantastic official RFDS merchandise and order online.

Your order form >

	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
RFDS Christmas Gift Cards (includes postage)			
Outback Arrival	\$25.00		
Mercy Dash	\$30.00		
Midnight Mission	\$50.00		
New Medi-Jet 24	\$50.00		
RFDS MERCHANDISE			
The Tom Kruse Collection DVD (includes postage)	\$39.95		
Order Subtotal			
YOUR DONATION – THANK YOU (tax deductible over \$2)			
Order Total			

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Items and receipts will be delivered to the nominated address below.

Title	First Name
Surname	
Supporter number (Seven digit number located above your name in the accompanying letter.)	
Address	
Suburb/Town	
State	Postcode
Daytime telephone ()	
Email	

Method of payment

- ☐ Cheque/Money Order enclosed and made payable to: RFDS Central Operations.
- ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ AMEX

Card number
Expiry /
Cardholder's name

Signature
<input type="checkbox"/> Please send me information about arranging a regular donation to the RFDS.
<input type="checkbox"/> Please send me information about including a gift to the RFDS in my will.
<input type="checkbox"/> I have included the RFDS in my will.

Please check carefully that: the order form is fully completed. Use the reply paid envelope enclosed or post to: Royal Flying Doctor Service – PO Box 381 MARLESTON SA 5033.

If you have any questions, please call us on 08 8238 3333 during business hours.

Thank you for supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

'Donate' a Christmas gift that saves lives >

Buy an RFDS Gift Card

Are you looking for a great Christmas solution for that hard-to-buy-for person? This Christmas, make a donation to the RFDS and we will send you an RFDS card for you to give to the recipient.

Each Gift Card showcases a signature image of our RFDS aircraft at work, making it the perfect addition to the mantelpiece.

Give a Gift Card that makes a real difference!

It's simple!

1. Four Gift Cards are available, with values of \$25, \$30 and \$50. Each Gift Card includes a printed Christmas greeting and mentions that a donation has been made to the RFDS as your Christmas gift to them.
2. Choose one or several, and complete the order form inside the AirDoctor magazine, or call us to order on (08) 8238 3333.
3. The amount you pay for Gift Cards is a tax deductible donation to the RFDS – we will send you a receipt.
4. We will send you the Gift Cards, with envelopes. Just add your name (and personal greeting if you wish) before giving your Gift Cards to family and friends on Christmas Day.

RFDS Christmas Gift Cards indicate you have given a Christmas donation to the RFDS with your recipient in mind. They have no cash value and are not redeemable for purchase of RFDS merchandise.
Card size: 99mm x 210mm wide (DL).

\$25
Outback
Arrival



\$30
Mercy Dash



\$50
Midnight
Mission



\$50
New Medi-
Jet 24



Season's
Greetings

Dear

As my Christmas gift to you,
I have made a donation to the
Royal Flying Doctor Service, to
help provide 24/7 emergency
aeromedical and primary health
care in remote and rural Australia.



Save lives from the ground >

As an RFDS Regular Giver, we make it easy for you to help us deliver urgent care in regional, rural and remote areas throughout South and Central Australia.

You can arrange automatic donations with your credit card, or by direct debit from your bank account – you choose the frequency and the amount – and we look after the rest! With one receipt summary issued annually we also make it easy for you at tax time.

To begin your regular giving today, please call 1800 813 318 or visit flyingdoctor.org.au/sant/regular



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