

Going the

October 2020

DISTANCE

Stories of strength and survival, made possible by you



Thanks to you
we're getting essential
health care to people
who need it.



Royal Flying Doctor Service
VICTORIA



To you,
from Scott

I want to say thank you.

This year has presented many new challenges for the Flying Doctor. Our services have been heavily impacted and we are operating in difficult settings – yet I remain optimistic.

Naturally, there are moments of frustration and moments of happiness – but throughout it all there is optimism. It is the driving force that will take us forward.

I have been overwhelmed by the way supporters like you have stepped up to help their fellow Australians this year. Your kindness, compassion and generosity underpins my optimism.

I keep coming back to the words of our founder, John Flynn; “When you start something worthwhile... nothing will stop it.” And you are essential to that statement.

Together we have been providing essential health care for our rural and regional communities, and that work does not stop.

Optimism is infectious, and that energy will pull us all forward. Your support of the Flying Doctor makes a genuine difference to the lives of people all over Australia. Thank you for being part of the solution and providing hope for the future.

Scott Chapman
Chief Executive
Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria

Photo credit: tripadvisor



WOMEN'S HEALTH M

Town Councillor Brownyn Simpson, patient of Dr Vivienne, appreciates how beneficial the service has been for all women in her community.

The Rural Women's GP Service in Charlton is a wonderful example of how your support provides people in rural communities with essential health care services.

It's no surprise that most women would prefer to see a female doctor – especially when it comes to health issues and examinations of a more personal nature. And that's exactly what we're providing in Charlton, thanks to you.

Before the arrival of the Rural Women's GP Service, women would often face lengthy journeys into larger towns if they wanted to see a female doctor.

As a result, many women were having important health checks less often, or even missing them altogether.

The difference your support makes for women like Brownyn

Everyone can access the Rural Women's GP Service, but the service has made a particular difference to women like Town Councillor, Brownwyn Simpson.

A resident of Charlton for over 20 years, Brownwyn would still make the seven-hour round trip to Melbourne for her gynecological appointments.

As she explains, “When the RFDS provided a Rural Women's GP Service, it was a godsend. At last I had a lady doctor who I could talk to. I have a half-hour appointment, which means that I don't feel rushed in and rushed out. I have time to talk to them and to have my mammogram and smear. It's a service that is so appreciated by our community.”



MATTERS



With your support, Dr Vivienne can give all women in Charlton and Yarram the time and specialist care they need.

Having been diagnosed with uterine cancer eight years ago, and more recently with type 2 diabetes, these regular checkups are absolutely crucial to Bronwyn’s ongoing health and wellbeing.

A much-needed service for all women

As one of the GPs working as part of the Rural Women’s GP Service, Dr Vivienne Whitechurch has been treating rural patients for more than 10 years. She works in the towns of Charlton and Yarram, and knows how much the service means to residents in those communities – particularly women.

“The women are very appreciative of us coming out to them because they’ll travel three or four hours to appointments for their kids or husbands. They

put themselves last, so then their health needs get put to one side.

“I see a lot of middle-aged women with gynaecological or menopausal issues. Some of the older ladies will come and talk to me about incontinence, or other personal problems that they are too embarrassed to mention to their normal GP. Like many small towns, we also have quite a lot of women and girls dealing with mental health issues.”

Dr Vivienne also knows how important your support is to the future of essential health care services like the Rural Women’s GP Service.

Thank you for making essential health care more accessible to people living in rural communities.

“Your support makes a huge difference to the lives of these rural women. If we look after them, they can look after their families. They deserve the same care as anyone else.”

DR VIVIENNE

GIVE THEM WINGS... WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Now in its 10th year, the *Give Them Wings* scholarship program has been providing much-needed support to rural and regional students embarking on their first year of tertiary study in Nursing or Allied Health.

The program, proudly funded by the RFDS Bayside Auxiliary, not only helps students with the high costs associated with living and studying at university, it also promotes the need for skilled medical professionals working in the bush.

To celebrate this 10th anniversary, we wanted to share with you the incredible journey of our past award recipient, Renee Watkins.



My name is Renee Watkins and I was one of the recipients of the 2017 RFDS "Give Them Wings" scholarship.

Currently, I am a third-year student at Monash University; undertaking a Bachelor of Nursing and Midwifery (Honours). This career move has taken me on the most rewarding journey I could have ever imagined. I hope to graduate next year to start my career in the rural health workforce.

Last year, I commenced a month-long rural health placement in Tennant Creek, Northern Territory, where I learnt the ins and outs of practicing in the heart of Australia. I was fortunate enough to work with the Flying Doctor flight team through the Tennant Creek Emergency Department, and felt immensely privileged to have provided care to a vulnerable population.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Tennant Creek is approx. 80%. This is important to my family, with the last remaining connection to my Aboriginal ancestry passing away recently. I have been able to rekindle my love for this community by providing culturally sustainable health care while in the NT.

I wanted to thank the Flying Doctor again for all their help in getting me to where I am today. I hope to do more work with the Flying Doctor in the future, particularly in Women's Health and Remote Nursing, or maybe even with the flight team.

I am forever grateful for the opportunities awarded to me, and hope the Flying Doctor continue doing the formidable work they do.

Warmest Regards,
Renee Watkins, 2017 "Give Them Wings" Scholar

Renee receiving a *Give Them Wings* scholarship in 2017. Three years later, she is so thankful for what she's been able to achieve since.



This career move has taken me on the most rewarding journey I could have ever imagined.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020 GIVE THEM WINGS SCHOLARS:

Nikki Watts, Yea

Bachelor of Applied Science/Master of Physiotherapy
LaTrobe University

Tilly Lang-Ashworth, Barongarook

Bachelor of Nursing
Deakin University

Tanika Moore, Druin

Bachelor of Paramedicine
Australian Catholic University

Lydia Reiske, Yinnar

Bachelor of Biomedical Science
LaTrobe University



“THE POSTIE TOLD ME!”

With your help, the Flying Doctor can provide a vital link to health care and the community for Heathcote residents like Mavis and her daughter Brittany.

Twice a week, Mavis is delighted to see the Flying Doctor arrive at her door. For Mavis, it means her daughter, who has a disability, will receive the care she needs in Bendigo – 50 kilometres away.

Brittany uses a wheelchair so the challenges of travel with her mum makes the trip difficult for the two of them.

“I was going into Bendigo two days a week. It’s a 100KM round trip and it takes quite a bit of your day too. You get home, you’ve still got to shower her and get her tea and all that,” Mavis shared.

Mavis would also struggle to help Brittany with her wheelchair. “I’ve got to push her downhill, that’s fine but back up the hill, I’m a bit past that.”

As a donor herself, Mavis had always known about the Flying Doctor. You can imagine how surprised she was when she heard that the Flying Doctor was launching a free transport service in her community, in partnership with Heathcote Health.

She received a letter from the Flying Doctor and “the local postie told me!” Mavis laughed.

Flying Doctor Community Transport operates in Heathcote and surrounds, offering its service to eligible residents like Mavis and Brittany.

Our wonderful team of local volunteers who drive them to health appointments and community activities are always ready to help.

“The drivers are fantastic. They’re so helpful! It’s been fabulous to have the Flying Doctor pick up Brittany every other night and bring her back home right to my door.”

Everything is now easier for Mavis and Brittany. “Now I can have everything ready when she comes in, it’s just made such a difference,” Mavis said. “It’s a terrific service”.

Your support means we can continue to transport families with complex accessibility needs like Mavis and Brittany.



With your support, Mavis’ daughter Brittany can use the Community Transport Service to go to Bendigo.

MEET FLIGHT NURSE PETER BLACKWELL

Thanks to you, patients who require urgent medical attention can rely on the care and experience of flight nurses like Peter.

Peter Blackwell has been a Critical Care Nurse with the Flying Doctor for 16 years. He spent seven of them based in Bundaberg in Queensland, where he thrived on the adrenaline and responsibility of being on board missions into remote regions.

"The days would be 12-hour shifts. One day you'll be landing on a red dirt strip at a big pastoral property. You've got a stockman that's been injured by a bull, bitten by a snake or involved in a tractor accident. Another day you'll be flying somebody with respiratory problems to hospital in Brisbane."

Today, Peter is a highly respected member of the Flying Doctor crew based at Essendon Fields Airport, Melbourne.

Knowing that your life could be in his hands, Peter is always very well prepared.

"We get a formal handover from the hospitals, and make sure that the patients are suitable for flying. We check the aircraft, stock it as necessary."

There are other important considerations for flight nurses like Peter. "When you're in the aircraft with patients who have suffered something like a head injury, you've got to think about your aviation physiology – gas expansions, sea level pressure, etc."

Peter clearly loves his job and the opportunity to make a difference to people from all walks of life.

"I've met some amazing people. From being welcomed into remote Aboriginal communities, right through to taking a little baby and mum back to Bundaberg. After landing we stopped off at the dad's workplace nearby to introduce him to his newborn. He came outside and cried."

Thank you for enabling our crew members like Peter to save lives and help people all over Australia.



Going above and beyond the call of duty: Peter was awarded the National Emergency Medal for his services during the 2010/11 Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi (left) and a Defence Medal for his service in the Royal Australian Navy Reserve (right).

"You're on your own up there. 80% of the time – it's only the Flight Nurse. If something goes really bad, you're it. The pilot can't leave the pilot's chair obviously."

- PETER

GIVING SOMETHING BACK

Originally from Taiwan, Jack Chen and his wife Jane emigrated to Melbourne 36 years ago. They came with nothing but hope for a better life and education for their children.

Hard-working and willing to learn, Jack discovered that he had a wonderful business opportunity, using his contacts in Taiwan and Japan to trade in hay. He set up a factory in Bendigo and travelled extensively in Victoria and New South Wales, dealing with farmers and landowners across vast rural areas.

"To be honest, I had no idea what a farm looked like until we got involved in the hay business. I have a lot of good friends on the farm side now. People are very nice.

They are ready to share their knowledge. I learned a lot thanks to them."

It was during these travels that Jack learnt about the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Seeing how far away some of his customers were from civilisation and medical services, made him realise what a vital service the Flying Doctor is. Jack and his family have been loyal friends and supporters of the Flying Doctor ever since.

As Jack said, "In a big area like Australia, you need the Flying Doctor. Otherwise, if the farmers get sick, what would they do?"

Jack feels very fortunate for the life he and his family have enjoyed in Australia, and supporting the Flying Doctor is his way of giving something back to the rural communities that have welcomed him over the years.



Life took Jack and Jane from Taiwan to rural Australia, where they discovered the Flying Doctor.

"In a big area like Australia, you need the Flying Doctor."

- JACK

A special invitation to the

RFDS VICTORIA AGM FORUM: *Rising to the challenge*

We are enormously grateful for the kindness and generosity you've shown the Flying Doctor and to celebrate we'd like to invite you to our AGM Forum. We hope you'll join us at this virtual event to hear from our Chief Executive and to learn more about the way your support is saving lives.

Date: 26 November 2020 | Time: 11:00 AM | Location: Online

To register your attendance, please visit:

www.flyingdoctor.org.au/vic/events

For more information please contact **events@rfdsvic.com.au**
or call our friendly Events team on **1300 669 569**

STIMULATING CURIOUS MINDS... OF ALL AGES

Have you heard about our free education program *Look! Up in the Sky?* Usually delivered to schoolchildren across the state, the program is also available online. You can learn more about the Flying Doctor through short films, a virtual museum, photos, projects and more!

It's a fantastic resource, whether you're looking for something to stimulate

young minds, or you're curious to learn more about the Flying Doctor yourself.

Discover how a Flying Doctor aircraft is built, see how our paramedics carefully remove their personal protective equipment step by step, or learn what do to if someone gets bitten by a snake.

Simply visit
flyingdoctor4education.org.au



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www.flyingdoctor.org.au



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