

# TakeOff

IN THE AIR, ON THE GROUND

ANNIVERSARY  
**60<sup>th</sup>**  
EDITION



Royal Flying Doctor Service  
TASMANIA

## Inside

- > Premier launches mobile health hubs
- > Cape Barren Island airstrip upgrade underway
- > How the RFDS helped WWII casualties

## PLUS

Re-live our first flight with a pioneer ambulance officer

*Celebrating*  
**60 years**  
*of service to*  
**TASMANIA**



- | Aeromedical support
- | Physical and mental health programs
- | Dental outreach
- | Patient road transport
- | Medical chests
- | Education

We're covering Tasmania with care



# Milestones amid the madness

A message from RFDS Tasmania CEO John Kirwan



RFDS Tasmania CEO John Kirwan and Tasmanian Premier Peter Gutwein at the launch of two new health hub buses.

Welcome to our special 60th Anniversary edition of Take Off magazine which has been launched in September, a key month for RFDS Tasmania with the service officially formed on September 12 and our first aeromedical flight taking place two days later on September 14.

The whole year was set for celebration and in February we had just started our first couple of events to mark our 60th year of service to the Tasmanian community.

The pandemic discussion was only just building. Then it hit like a tsunami.

While pandemics are not new, they are not easy to deal with. Our thoughts go to our colleagues in Victoria and those RFDS staff members who are at the front line.

Nationally since February the RFDS has conducted 1578 patient episodes of care for confirmed or suspected COVID-19. There have been 1514 inter-hospital transfers and 63 primary evacuations with all patients either confirmed or strongly suspected of having COVID-19.

A total of 1288 transfers have occurred within Victoria (82% of the total figure) and have been done by road ambulance. There is a continued heavy patient demand in Victoria with an average of 20 transportations every day within the locked-down state.

Since February the Tasmanian Section, like all sections, has been managing the impact of COVID on our services and staff. We have a Business Continuity and Risk Management Plan, updated regularly and now up to version 15, and a Risk Management Recovery Plan that we are looking forward to implementing.

Most of our primary health care services remain online with transition back to face-to-face consultations progressing as staff are trained in new procedures and all services have to prepare COVID plans under state Workplace Health and Safety legislation to be able to operate.

While not without challenges, tele-health is part of the RFDS DNA, and we have set up our two main medical

records systems as digital, so we were able to transition to working from home and tele-health quite seamlessly. Many clients have indicated they actually prefer consultations online or on the phone!

Our Mobile Dental Care has almost returned to normal, although we're still feeling the effects of losing our longest serving, much-loved and definitely most travelled dentist Dr Lorika Strickland who has moved to England.

We were all overwhelmed with the kind words and lovely messages from around the state when her departure was announced.

For a snapshot of the impact of COVID on our services, in the first nine months of 2019/20 our mobile teams (dental, primary care and mental health) travelled the equivalent to 124 times around Tasmania. Since then the batteries in our fleet have gone flat.

To provide Ambulance Tasmania with more space and to make the main base at Launceston Airport, building 90, a secure area, we moved staff to B85 and B75 and no longer have an actual office/shop front to receive donations or sell merchandise.

The one area we have not been able to risk manage has been the absence of face-to-face functions and fundraising.

We enjoy getting involved in community events and connecting with the people in our service areas, which is now nearly every LGA in Tasmania, and we miss the interaction and opportunities it brings.

With optimism we are planning to re-start our 60th celebrations from now and continue into 2021.

As the focus turns to vaccines and recovery it is relevant to reflect on why

the RFDS was invited by the State Government to Tasmania.

As mentioned in the article on the Cape Barren Island airstrip upgrade (page 4-5), Dr George Simpson, from the RFDS said: "There are communities on the Bass Strait islands, on other islands adjacent to the coast and in some areas of the Tasmanian mainland as isolated as any in Australia. Although distances are not great, these people are isolated, except by air transport because of water or difficult terrain."

“While isolation is not new to many of our communities, patients and clients, the current pandemic restrictions and pressures add a new dimension, and reinforce the need for our outreach services.”

While isolation is not new to many of our communities, patients and clients, the current pandemic restrictions and pressures add a new dimension, and reinforce the need for our outreach services to these communities.

It's also why we chose our birthday to launch a new Facebook group called RFDS Tasmania – Our Caring Community, which is another avenue to stay connected to the wider RFDS family, tell us about your experiences and get some great tips on staying happy and healthy and up to date with RFDS programs in your area.

## Health hubs hit the road

by Lana Best



Two former public transport buses donated by the Tasmanian Government and transformed into mobile health clinics with a \$100,000 Commonwealth Government grant and funds raised by Rotary Tasmania were officially handed over to Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania at its Launceston base on Thursday, July 30.

The buses have already had their first outing at Fingal, achieving the goal of allowing the RFDS to embed its primary health care team in more rural and remote communities.

RFDS staff will use the buses to provide mental health care, preventative health screening clinics, tele-health services, counselling, cardiopulmonary rehabilitation advice, nutritional and health education, with focused spaces for activity and technology use, a resource library, small kitchenette and a covered outdoor option to provide space for larger groups.

With an emphasis on increasing youth mental health support in the bush, the health hubs will also provide a safe and suitable setting for young people aged 8-16 years and if necessary be used to respond in a timely manner to extraordinary incidents affecting Tasmanian's physical and mental health, such as in times of bushfire.

"Every day we look for ways to reduce preventable hospitalisations, to fight chronic disease, to improve health outcomes and be there for those reaching out in a time of great need," RFDS CEO John Kirwan said.

"The support of the Federal and State Governments, the drive and passion of many Rotary Club volunteers plus local business and community support has resulted in this project coming to fruition and we now have the privilege of taking the mobile health hubs to where they're needed most."

Rotary Tasmania Community Care chair John Dare said the launch of the mobile health hubs demonstrated an incredible collaboration where everyone involved put the health of their communities first.

"Rotary's roots go deep and we know first-hand about the health problems experienced in country areas. We recognised immediately the impact this project would have and were on board from the first phone call from RFDS.

"Working with a terrific committee for the past year and watching so many people work together on the buses to take us up to this launch day has been absolutely magic."

60<sup>th</sup> YEAR SNAPSHOT

## Primary Health

The provision of free primary health care services, with funding from Primary Health Tasmania, is today the biggest health service provided by Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania.

While our history is wrapped up in aeromedical work our wheels are now firmly on the ground with a focus on improved health outcomes for people living in rural and remote areas through the delivery of mental health and wellbeing and exercise programs.

Our physical health team works across the north-east and south of the state to support people living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease, dementia, mental illness and chronic musculoskeletal disorders.

The primary health team supports and educates people to have a better understanding of their chronic health conditions to self-manage their conditions and reduce hospitalisations.

Each program is flexible and free and provides options for group support or individualised consultations for eligible people living in the Glamorgan Spring Bay, Break O'Day, Flinders Island, Dorset, Georgetown, Bruny Island, Tasman Peninsula and Huon Valley communities.

The RFDS Youth Mental Health program funded by the Commonwealth Government continues to support young people aged 8 to 16 years who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues in remote and rural areas of Tasmania.

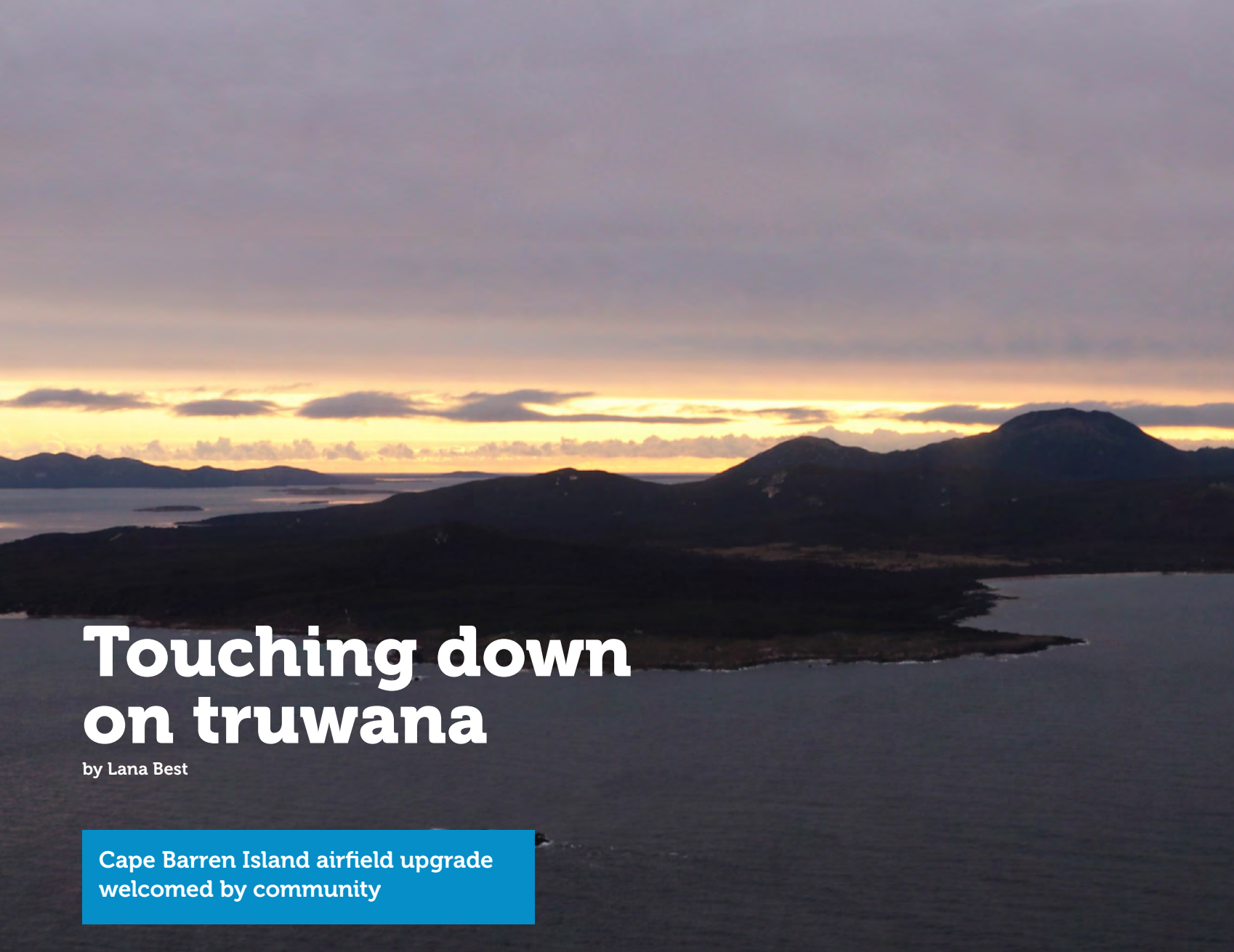
The free mental health program supports eligible youth living in the Central Highlands, West Coast, Northern Midlands, Meander Valley, Break O'Day and Glamorgan Spring Bay areas and the team provides face-to-face, telehealth, one-on-one or group sessions.

During the past 12 months service delivery expanded and we welcomed additional staff to the team, allowing for more than 1500 clients to receive more than 15,000 contacts and a total of 175,568 kms of road was traversed.

This includes bringing the National Rural and Remote Better Ageing Program to people over the age of 65 years in the Meander Valley area.

Although face-to-face support is part of our core model, during the pandemic our teams have embraced new and innovative techniques to support our clients and we've continued to grow our services through online platforms, live Q&A sessions and by utilising the latest advances in digital health solutions.





# Touching down on truwana

by Lana Best

Cape Barren Island airfield upgrade welcomed by community

The original truwana/Cape Barren Island airstrip was carved out of the native ti-tree in January, 1958, by a group of 12 local volunteers using slash hooks, axes and mattocks, with heavy horses pulling ploughs and smudgers to prepare the soil before grass was sewn.

Small aircraft had been landing there since the early 30s – one of the first flights being to drop off a school teacher – but it was a case of risking a landing in a rough clearing possibly covered in native wildlife.

Since then the airfield has provided a lifeline for the remote island community,

currently numbering around 60, with aeromedical retrievals, freight and general transportation to Flinders Is and mainland Tasmania becoming easier and faster.

It was the stories from Tasmanian Aero Club pilot Reg Munro (1914-1980) about daring mercy flights to Bass Strait Islands to pick up sick and injured patients that convinced Dr George Simpson, second in command to the Royal Flying Doctor Service founder John Flynn, that an RFDS service was vital in Tasmania.

“There are communities on the Bass Strait islands, on other islands adjacent to the coast and in some areas of the

Tasmanian mainland as isolated as any in Australia,” he said in a report after his guided tour.

“Although distances are not great, these people are isolated, except by air transport because of water or difficult terrain.”

As a result of that report, and with the support of the then health minister Dr “Spot” Turnbull, the Tasmanian section was formed and started operating on Monday, September 12, 1960.

Three airstrips are now in place on Cape Barren Is – the main gravel strip that runs east/west and is used by most aircraft, another NE/SW grass strip which provides an option for landing depending on wind conditions, and another grass NW/SE strip currently non-operational.

With no lighting the airstrip cannot be used at night.

The Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association Incorporated (CBIAAI) recently received a Commonwealth



CBM general manager Liam Dingemanse and Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association chair Aaron Maynard at the truwana Cape Barren Island airfield which is currently being upgraded.



Department of Communities project manager Stephen Yam, Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association chair Aaron Maynard and CBM general manager Liam Dingemanse inspecting the new water treatment plant.



Government grant of nearly \$500,000 to upgrade the airfield which is constantly battered by the elements and encroached by the tough native vegetation.

CBIAAI general manager Denise Gardner said “the airstrip is our lifeline – we cannot operate without that service therefore it’s imperative that we maintain the airstrip to the best of our ability, including sourcing funds to allow us to do so”.

“Safety of all air operators and in turn passengers is paramount. This upgrade will certainly improve the airstrip condition to allow safe passage for all who fly to and from the island.

After a short delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the upgrade is now underway with Tasmanian company CBM Sustainable Design contracted to manage works associated with vegetation management, drainage upgrades, runway resurfacing and the supply of aerodrome equipment, replacement and spares.

CBM worked with the aboriginal community pro bono to put the submission together and the RFDS provided letters of support and information from pilots and management to help secure the funding.

CBM general manager and senior engineer Liam Dingemanse said the airstrip upgrade work was a welcome addition to several other projects that the company has led in recent times – including the building of a new water treatment plant and the installation of a solar power plant.

“We’ve really connected with the island over the past 10 years and we like to think we’re really making a difference,” he said.

“Remote communities like this can be a bit forgotten and over time infrastructure gets run down, there’s no ongoing training or support for workers and it’s easy for things to fall into disrepair.

“Our role has been to not just do a project but follow up and continue the relationship. It’s been wonderful to see the employment that’s been created and the improved living conditions for the residents.”

The Cape Barren Island airstrip upgrade is part of the Federal Government’s \$9 million investment across 45 projects.

In announcing the funding in May, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Michael McCormack said funding under the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program will enhance the safety and accessibility of aerodromes in remote areas and improve delivery of essential goods and services including health care.



CBM general manager Liam Dingemanse at the truwana Cape Barren Island airfield.

“Safety of all air operators and in turn passengers is paramount. This upgrade will certainly improve the airstrip condition to allow safe passage for all who fly to and from the island.”

- CBIAAI general manager Denise Gardner





*The first official flight of RFDS Tasmania with ambulance officers Brian Scanlon (left) and Leigh Bradshaw (right) unloading an appendicitis patient at Cambridge Airport.*

# Ambulance officers and aero clubs teamed up for first flight

## Get in touch

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Team leader **Zoe Page** 03 6779 1483  
or 0447 388 755

Brian Scanlon joined the St John's Ambulance Service cadets in Hobart when he was 11 years old and little did he know that he would go on to play a part in a historic event for Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania when it made its first official flight on September 14, 1960.

Now retired and living in Adelaide, Brian recalls his rise from cadet, to a paid position as a junior then senior ambulance officer with St John's Ambulance to Deputy Superintendent of the Ambulance Board of Southern Tasmania.

While working as an ambulance officer Brian and four colleagues were asked by the Tasmanian Government to revitalise the city's ambulance service.

"In those early days we were averaging about six cases a day – but that didn't last for long as we brought more ambulances and more staff on line and the calls started to increase," Brian said.

"We weren't paramedics – we were basically driving by the seat of our pants, turning up to emergency medical calls with nothing but some basic first aid knowledge and just doing the best we could.

"I remember turning out to a call to the local brickworks and a man had taken some short cuts to turn off a switch and got his arm caught in machinery. It was

all but chopped off and we had to call in a doctor to cut away the remaining tissue so we could get him out and get him to hospital."

RFDS Federation Office asked Brian to establish an interim aeromedical service while they worked on establishing an RFDS service in Tasmania, and they could not have chosen better.

Aside from his love of first aid he had long been interested in flying, but couldn't afford the 1000 pounds required to get flying lessons, and he considered this job the next best thing.

With the aim of efficiency he set up a charter service with the Southern Aero Club which made its pilots and fleet available to take the ambulance officers on emergency evacuation flights around the state. He later moved to Launceston and established the same service utilising the Tasmanian Aero Club.

Brian tasked all the calls, rostered the staff, organised flying permission from the Department of Civil Aviation before every flight and notified airports of impending medical retrievals.

"We had an ancient stretcher, first aid kit and oxygen kit, that was pretty much it. We'd pull a couple of seats out of a plane and off we'd go," Brian said.

Just one year later, an RFDS national council meeting in Melbourne approved the formation of the Tasmanian Section

and the service began on September 12, 1960, from an office at 77 Argyle St, Hobart.

Two days later, on September 14, Brian took the first official call to the RFDS – the doctor in Queenstown had appendicitis!

Tasking himself to make the trip in a Cessna 182 Brian coordinated the flight with the then contractor Tas Air at Cambridge Airport and with pilot Peter Tanner flew into Queenstown.

"I asked the pilot to return at an altitude under 4000 feet if he could, to avoid peritonitis, and that's what he did. Other than the usual pushing and pulling to get the stretcher in and out through the side door, the job went smoothly."

That was not the case when on another flight to Queenstown late at night, to pick up a seriously ill teenager, the pilot was forced to attempt his first ever landing at the difficult airstrip with no runway lights.

"The local cop got all the locals out of the pubs and houses and they lined the runway with their car headlights and the cop cars' blue flashing lights marked the start and end of the strip – if he couldn't see well enough to land we were going to touch and go but he managed to put it down," Peter said.

"Then everyone reversed their cars to help us take off."

There were night flights to King Island (also no runway lights), lots of flights out of Launceston to Flinders Is and Cape Barren Island, occasional pick-ups from Bruny Island and even a foggy flight between Launceston and Hobart where the pilot had to fly low over the Midland Highway to keep his bearings.

"I loved that job, and made 44 flights with the RFDS between 1960 and 1973. Each ambulance officer took turns doing the aeromedical work and I mainly put my name down for the after-hours shifts. Basically I was on call 24/7."

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## RFDS Primary School Base Visits

- > FREE of charge
- > Tours last from 1 1/2 - 2 hours
- > K - 6
- > Depending on student's age there are two tours to choose from
- > Learn about the RFDS and what we do in Tasmania
- > Participate in some fun, hands on activities
- > Limited dates available

Contact [Jocelyn.McLean@rfdstas.org.au](mailto:Jocelyn.McLean@rfdstas.org.au) to book or find out more

TAKING  
BOOKINGS



*Deputy superintendent of the Ambulance board of Southern Tasmania Brian Scanlon tasking the first calls for the Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania Section in September, 1960. Photo courtesy Mercury Newspaper.*

RFDS Tasmania made 137 flights in its first 12 months of operation.

Slowly but surely the sophistication of the training and equipment used in the flying ambulance increased leading up to the highly trained Ambulance Tasmania paramedics who, supported with infrastructure from RFDS, provide all the aeromedical retrieval work in Tasmania today.

Another first for Brian during his time with the RFDS was testing and utilising the first flying ECG unit in an aircraft in Tasmania.

The two-way radio coronary system was the brainchild of Hobart GP Dr J. Freeman, who had been away on a scholarship in the US and returned with the equipment.

RFDS Tasmania manager Doug Woodhouse tested the unit with Brian relaying his heartbeat to Royal Hobart Hospital over a distance of 30 miles on a flight back from Bruny Island on December 7, 1972.

Brian never lost his love of flying, managing to cajole pilots into giving him lessons during empty backloads.

These days Brian is content spending time on his comprehensive flight simulation program which is set up in his home. And he's looking forward to taking a tour of the RFDS Central Operations base in Adelaide and getting up close to the new RFDS medi-jet when Covid restrictions ease.

"I think that it's been well proven that the RFDS has been invaluable to Tasmania over the past 60 years with health services that reach the places that are no different to the mainland's outback – they're isolated and a long way from specialised health care," he said.

"I'm proud to say that I helped pioneer this service and I look forward to seeing how it evolves into the future."



# 60<sup>th</sup> YEAR SNAPSHOT Dental

During the past year the RFDS mobile dental care team has expanded its services into the east coast of Tasmania, at Swansea with the support of May Shaw Health Centre, and to the Bass Strait island communities of King and Flinders Island, in partnership with Oral Health Services Tasmania (OHST) to provide free dental treatments to eligible patients.

The dental program is a community-based program with dental staff travelling to rural and remote locations weekly and tailoring dental care to accommodate a community's need.

This now means in many cases our patients no longer need to travel long distances to receive essential health services for themselves or family



members, which has led to a decrease in social isolation and financial burdens.

Requests for appointments with the dental team continued to increase with 1191 patients seen over 2581 visits in the past 12-month period.

A total of 13,423 treatments were provided to our patients through a mixed delivery method of fixed clinics, mobile outreach visits to schools along with visiting aged care facilities.

The development of a purpose-built mobile dental vehicle was made possible thanks to the support of Woolnorth Renewables and this will enable the dental team to provide dental services in communities where we currently cannot

access a fixed dental clinic.

Having just been completed we are looking forward to it making it's first school visits in coming weeks.

The dental program in 2019/2020 has grown from visiting two fixed clinics to now travelling to both King and Flinders island and increasing access to communities by the provision of our mobile dental vehicle.

While we sadly said goodbye to long-term dentist Dr Lorika Strickland, who has moved to England to be with her husband, we hope to have a new addition to the team soon and due to demand will be working towards having a total of three dentals teams covering the state.

# 60<sup>th</sup> YEAR SNAPSHOT Education

The onset of a pandemic has meant RFDS educational base tours have been on hold for most of the year, although 80 students from Hagley Farm Primary School were lucky to visit the base in March just before restrictions came into play.

Lockdowns around the country meant that our already comprehensive list of online educational resources became more important than ever for teachers, parents and children, and education officer Jocelyn McLean also added a series of online activities designed to keep primary school aged children engaged with us as well as provide extracurricular fun for kids who had all their activities cancelled.

These have proved extremely popular with the activities able to be done independently, if parents are working from home, or with the whole family. Five activities were released one per week for five weeks.

- **Your story.** Children were asked to contribute a story about where they live and what they have been doing during lockdown. These stories will be collated into an online book.

- **Our Story.** The story of the \$20 note. Children were directed to our education website to board a virtual tour of our plane and hear Sarah's story. Sarah

was transported by the RFDS after a snake bite. Children were shown the first aid treatment for a snake bite and encouraged to practice bandaging and send us a photo.

- **Health Prevention.** Claire Robertson (University qualified Nutritionist and Food Educator) ran a virtual cooking class, making healthy creatures and lunchbox muffins.

- **RFDS Planes.** All about our planes, facts and figures, rescue stories etc. Students were able to view videos from our RFDS YouTube page including the fit out of a RFDS plane and a virtual tour of the new jets and then tackle several fun craft activities.

- **Oral Health.** Children were directed to our information videos on the Oral Health Curriculum site and used the information from these videos to create a folding paper finger game.

To view or engage with our online resources go to [www.flyingdoctor4education.org.au](http://www.flyingdoctor4education.org.au)

For secondary school students, our Senior Health Studies Presentation has been updated and converted into a virtual presentation to allow the program to continue, with 11 schools already

requesting the information.

COVID has also played havoc with organisation of our scheduled education simulator tour due to the national education officer and simulator both being based in Melbourne. However things are looking positive with essential traveller status likely followed by isolation ahead of the tour.

Scholarships placements have also been tricky as these also involve interstate travel.

The RFDS Fairbrother First Year Nursing Scholarship has been awarded to Eve Bell of Port Sorell and the RFDS CTA 4th Year Medical Scholarships has been awarded to Emily Murray, Emma Hicks and Charlotte Piper.

The Fred McKay Medical Scholarship has been awarded to Alice Thompson and her placement to Broken Hill is currently on schedule. The Robin Miller Nursing Scholarship has been awarded to Schuyler Tin and a placement at an RFDS base is being arranged for early next year.

For more information on our education program or to book a school tour contact Jocelyn McLean at [Jocelyn.mclean@rfdstas.org.au](mailto:Jocelyn.mclean@rfdstas.org.au)



# How the RFDS trained RAAF pilots in aeromedical retrieval

by Lana Best

**It's been 75 years since World War II ended on September 2, 1945, and the deadliest military conflict in history, in which an estimated 70-85 million people perished, had few positives emerge from its horrors.**



*The DH-86 aircraft used by the RFDS and the RAAF for aeromedical retrievals during WWII.*

However two advancements, one in the medical field and one in education, are both connected to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) and a special Tasmanian.

At the outbreak of the war the success of the Aerial Medical Service (later to become the RFDS), prompted the Royal Australian Air Force to establish its first air ambulance service.

Former RFDS doctor Flight Lieutenant Dr George Simpson was asked to set up the Air Ambulance unit to operate in the North African Desert Campaign.

Strategic medivac from the area of operations back to permanent facilities in Australia or another allied country had not been possible before WWII when longer range aircraft became available.

By taking on the RFDS model and using its pilots to train military air crew, the Air Ambulance Unit was able to dramatically improve the way the wounded were transported to hospital from the front line.

The transportation of patients by air required 21 times fewer personnel than were required to transport the same number of patients by sea and the travel time was dramatically reduced which in turn saved many lives.

The Air Force No.1 Air Ambulance Unit at RAAF Laverton, Victoria, was equipped with three DH-86 Express former airliners

which were fitted out for aerial ambulance work and the unit flew its first medivac mission in the Middle East on August 3, 1941.

It went on to support both the British Eighth Army and Australian forces in its campaigns across North Africa, Sicily, Malta and Italy, evacuating 8252 patients to safety.

In its first year alone it lifted 700 wounded soldiers from the front line back to base hospitals, and one of those heroic pilots was northern Tasmanian commercial pilot Cpt Ern Annear, who was later awarded the Air Force Cross for outstanding courage and distinguished service.

Ern had flown for Holymans, and then he later moved to Broken Hill to fly under contract for RFDS NSW as its first pilot before joining the RAAF in 1941.

His son David Annear, who lives in Launceston, said that his dad was in his 30s when WWII started and he joined up, but as he was considered too old to fly combat missions he was sent to Ballarat to train pilots.

"But when Allied troops fighting in the Middle East found that they needed air ambulance squadrons to bring home injured troops they didn't have anyone to fly the planes so next thing dad knew was that he was on a train to Fremantle and off to the Middle East," David said.

Ern's knowledge of flying the DH-86 aircraft for the RFDS made him an invaluable instructor.

"He did drops to the Rats of Tobruk, he became Lord Mountbatten's personal pilot, and he became the staff pilot for the Allied Forces in the Middle East," David said.

On return from North Africa Ern joined a transport squadron flying DC3 Dakotas in the New Guinea campaign.

Ern Annear was 45 when he finally came home to the West Tamar.

Dr Simpson, along with Dr Alan Vickers from the RFDS, later surveyed and recommended the establishment of the RFDS Tasmania Section.

Its first flight was out of Hobart to Queenstown on September 14, 1960 and the first flight out of Launceston was a few days later on the 19th to Flinders Is.

The development of long-range high frequency radio during WWII enabled the RFDS to re-equip radio bases with high-powered war surplus radios and employ highly skilled ex-military operators.

In addition to enabling an improved aeromedical network it provided a means of delivering the iconic RFDS School of the Air program for isolated families, commencing in Alice Springs in 1952.

In 1962 RFDS Tasmania provided the King family at Port Davey in the state's far south west with an RFDS medical chest and connection to the School of the Air base at Port Augusta in SA for their two daughters.

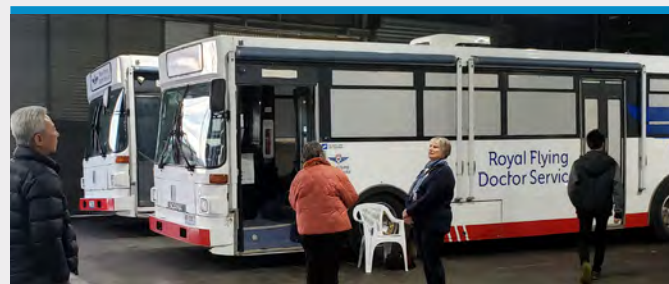
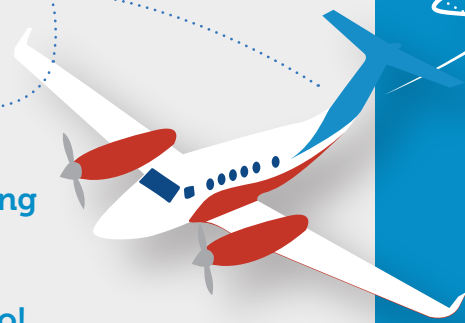
*ANA Pilot Cpt Earn Annear, Dr L. E. Odum and engineer Bill Ambory – the first aeromedical staff at the RFDS Broken Hill base in 1937.*





# Touch and Go

An aviation manoeuvre requiring a pilot landing on the runway and taking off again without a full stop. Here we provide you with “quick bites” of information: so you can touch and go!



## Volunteers get sneak peak of the growing fleet

It was lovely to see volunteers old and new get together at the Western Junction base recently after a period of low contact due to COVID-19 and its associated restrictions.

While events involving volunteers have been few and far between the launch of our Mobile Health Hubs and the completion of our new Mobile Dental Care truck presented a great opportunity for a special viewing of the vehicles, conversations with RFDS staff and stakeholders and a dinner meeting for those ready for a social outing.

As you'll read on the next page volunteer Christine Larissey and her brother Gavin made a heart-felt presentation on this evening and it was a chance to regroup and talk about plans for getting back to the business of promotion, fundraising and helping build the health of the communities we live in.

If you would like to join our growing band of volunteers please contact Lana Best on 0455 110 050.



## NATIONAL NEWS – New jet added to RFDS fleet

RFDS Central Operations has unveiled a second \$14 million purpose-built aeromedical jet to service the Northern Territory and South Australia.

The new \$14 million RFDS Medi-Jet 24 (VH-FZQ) arrived in Australia in late July, flown direct from the Pilatus Aircraft factory in Switzerland.

Purpose-built to deliver patient-centred care in the air, the RFDS Medi-Jet 24's signature RFDS aeromedical interior features customised life-support systems for up to three stretchered ICU patients or two Mansell Neocots concurrently.

It's the only aeromedical jet in the country with a rear patient loading door to enable safer, faster loading of patients and the aircraft has the ability to land on an unsealed airstrip to airlift a critically-ill patient from a remote community.

RFDS Western Operations also has two Medi-Jet 24s based in Perth and Broome with another on order due to begin operation in 2022.

## Drive 4X4 the Doc moves to a summer run

Originally planned for November the Drive 4X4 the Doc fundraising event has now been moved to February 7-12, 2021.

The sixth annual Drive 4x4 The Doc will for the first time spread its wings away from Victoria and NSW and Tasmanians are being encouraged to enter while it's on home soil.



With the principles of having fun, travelling to places you might not normally go, having a positive impact on the regions visited and raising much needed funds for an important local and national charity, the Drive 4x4 The Doc is an offshoot of the popular Outback Car Trek but designed more for the everyday family 4WD or larger AWDs.

The Drive 4x4 The Doc does not require any previous 4WD driving experience or skills and some participants even hire a 4WD just for the event.

Each person in a vehicle is required to raise and donate \$1000 to the RFDS as part of the entry conditions and this money stays in the home state of the participant.

The itinerary includes amazing driving and visitor experiences at Devonport, Dip Falls, Stanley, Corinna, Strahan, Queenstown, Tarraleah, Richmond and Hobart.

Anyone considering entering can contact Bill Patrick on 0418 626 799, Lana Best 0455 110 050 or get more information at [www.drive4x4thedoc.com.au/](http://www.drive4x4thedoc.com.au/)

# Making a Difference



## Pennefather family has ties that bind

Standing in hangar 85 at Launceston Airport, surrounded by the sights and smells of aviation and a fleet of RFDS primary health vehicles, the scene was appropriately set for a heartfelt donation to RFDS Tasmania by RFDS volunteer Christine Larissey and her brother Gavin Pennefather.

The presentation was made during a get together of RFDS staff and volunteers in August, in memory of their mother, Valerie Josephine Pennefather, who passed away on July 6, 2020.

The beloved mother, grandmother, great grandmother, friend and community member, was also a part of the RFDS family and a member of a family with ties stronger than most.

Valerie's husband was Vern Pennefather, one of the first pilots providing an aeromedical service to remote areas of Tasmania.



Vern and Valerie Pennefather – valued members of the RFDS family whose legacy continues through their children.

Born in Launceston, he was just 20 in 1947 when he took his first flying lesson with Cpt Reg Monroe at the Tasmanian Aero Club.

With a passion for flying that never waned, he went on to join the Royal Australian Air Force as a jet fighter pilot flying Mustangs, Vampires, and Meteors between 1950 and 1955.

Vern served in Australia and also overseas, where he was posted to the small Mediterranean island of Malta, as part of the United Nations peacekeeping forces protecting the Suez Canal.

“Dad's love of flying continued long after his professional career,” Christine recalled.

“Upon his retirement from the RAAF, he and mum, a young English lass who he met and married while overseas, returned to Launceston where he worked for approximately two years as a commercial pilot and instructor with the Tas

Above: Pilot Vern Pennefather in the cockpit of his Vampire fighter aircraft while taking part in a five-week armament practice camp at the RAF base in Cyprus.

Aero Club, before continuing on a voluntary basis,” she said.

“He gave many future pilots their initiation into flying, including current and recent RFDS pilots David Swiggs, David Liddell and RFDS Tasmania president Malcolm White.

It was through Vern's involvement with his old mentor, Reg Monroe, he become actively involved with the Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania dating back to the late 1950s when the service was operated by the Tasmanian Aero Club and following the official formation of the Tasmanian Section of the RFDS in 1960.

Initially his role was as a pilot, in times when seats had to be removed from prop engine light aircraft to facilitate the transfer of patients for hospital treatment.

Later he became a committee member and office bearer, serving as president for many years.

In 1967 Vern was honoured with Life Membership of the Tasmanian division and in 2003 he received a special Certificate of Recognition from RFDS Australia for his 40 years of continuous voluntary service to the organisation.

“When Vern passed away in 2011, a donation from family and friends was made to the RFDS, which had been a big part of his life, just as he had been a big part in the establishment of this vital service,” Gavin said.

“The money was used to purchase some new technology for the pilots and after dad's passing our mum continued the family's support of the RFDS.

“Once again her family and friends have decided to make a donation in her memory and we've organised for the funds to be used to support the vital role of the pilots.”

If you or anyone you know would like to know more about contributing a bequest, donation in lieu of flowers or a memorial gift to the RFDS please call Lana Best on (03) 63 910504.



Gavin Pennefather and Christine Larissey at the RFDS Tasmania base to make a donation in memory of their mother Valerie Pennefather.





## Officeworks small change enough to make a big change

With the catch-cry Give A Little, Change A Lot, Officeworks Hobart and Launceston customers really did Round Up To Make A Difference and led the country with their recent fundraising efforts for RFDS Tasmania.

A cheque for \$24,198 was presented to RFDS CEO John Kirwan and the funds will be used to support primary health services in the local government areas of Glamorgan Spring Bay, Break O'Day, George Town, Dorset, Flinders Island, Huon Valley, Tasman Peninsula and Bruny Island.

"These funds will help us get our dental teams and physical and mental health workers into areas where their expertise is needed most," Mr Kirwan said.

"In particular there is a growing need for mental health services in rural areas and this has been exacerbated due to stresses caused by the pandemic."

Officeworks General Manager Corporate Affairs Alexandra Staley said: "Now, more than ever, it is important to connect and support the communities where we live and work".

"It has been really rewarding to see the passion and commitment our store teams have for these causes and we are delighted with the results of this year and to support Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania."

Tasmanian Officeworks stores have also committed to supporting its health programs going forward and have made a huge contribution already with technology and office equipment for the two new mobile health hubs.

Thank you to all the hard working Officeworks teams and to everyone who rounded up at the checkout!

## YES! Here is my gift of support and/or please update my details



### Please accept my donation of:

☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$20  
☐ other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Please charge my credit card:

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

No.

Expiry date \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

OR ☐ my cheque or money order is attached

### My details:

Title \_\_\_\_\_ First name \_\_\_\_\_

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I wish my donation to remain anonymous

☐ Please call me to discuss how to make a provision in my Will