

TakeOff

IN THE AIR, ON THE GROUND



Royal Flying Doctor Service
TASMANIA



Inside this issue

- > **Fast delivery** - the heart-warming story of twins airlifted from Flinders Island
- > **Underwater beach** - a tale of pilots, picnics and skinny dipping at Lake Pedder
- > **Pilot pride** - Captain Stan Griffith's amazing milestone



LANA BEST
*Media, Marketing,
Fundraising Officer,
Take Off Magazine editor*

From the editor

A few months of working here at the Launceston base of RFDS Tasmania has shown me something that most people wouldn't realise – it's a very busy place!

Our plane, VH-LTQ, noisily warms up its twin engines and departs in front of the hangar, takes off, and then returns several times a day on average, with rostered Ambulance Tasmania paramedics on board caring for a patient in need.

After dashing off to a regional airstrip like King Island or St Helens to pick up the sick and injured, the pilots return to base for a break in their dedicated lounge area or to sit at the computer and complete the research, training and reporting that is a constant in their job.

While the dental and primary health care teams are embedded in regional communities around the state, on set days they congregate at the base for meetings and quiet offices are suddenly buzzing with health care professionals.

These men and women are so energetic and up-beat about the progress they make with individuals they see daily.

People who might be having some physical therapy sessions to help with heart and lung conditions or to rehabilitate after an operation, perhaps some mental health counselling to get them through some tough times, or they might have had their teeth restored so that they can smile or eat properly for the first time in ages.

Volunteers, donors, even tourists looking for an RFDS memento on the way to the airport, pop in and out.

The education officer brings school tours, often up to 60 students, through the facility and they not only get to see the plane, the training simulator, the airport fire trucks and other cool vehicles – but the excited squeals of delight and busy chatter as they take part in fun activities echoes down the hall.

Buzzing in and out between non-emergency patient transfers by road are the NEPTS (Non Emergency Patient Transfer Service) drivers, who literally travel the length and breadth of the state in their customised vans to help people get to where they need to be despite not being well enough to drive themselves or travel comfortably in a car.

The base manager, the plane mechanic, the board members, the CEO, the executive assistant, the accountant – using the facility to do their jobs as a vital part of a team that continues to grow in size as the need and funding dictates.

A more dedicated and fascinating bunch of people I could not imagine passing by my tiny office door or working alongside.

This edition of Take Off will give you a taste of the stories they can tell and the work that they do.

Please enjoy and if you're in the area, including our new Hobart office at 44 Davey St, please call in!

Celebrating success and getting on with the job

By John Kirwan

The year 2018 was one of exceptional growth and success for Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania, while maintaining the crucial aeromedical service relied upon by people living in the state's rural and remote areas.

Tasmania's plane, VH-LTQ, based at Launceston Airport and contracted to Ambulance Tasmania, is one of the busiest in the national fleet of more than 70 aircraft, with seven pilots on roster to transport acute care patients to hospital.

On a typical day, like December 11, it flew: Launceston to Flinders to Launceston to Hobart to Launceston to St Helens to Launceston to Hobart to Launceston to Essendon to Burnie to Launceston.

On December 12 it flew: Launceston to Hobart to Essendon to Burnie to Launceston to Flinders to Launceston to Essendon to Launceston.

More than 1200 flights took place last year to and from airstrips on King, Flinders and Cape Barren Islands and at Queenstown, Wynyard, Burnie, Devonport, Smithton, St Helens, Launceston, Hobart and Melbourne.

Working in partnership with Ambulance Tasmania, transporting sick and injured patients to hospital as quickly as possible is the heart of the operation.

However a holistic approach to healthcare for Tasmanians who struggle to access services in major centres means that RFDS Tasmania is just as important on the ground as in the air.

Consolidation of the organisation's primary healthcare strategy has resulted in the extension of dental and primary healthcare services in regional and rural Tasmania, including the recent successful tender with Primary Health Tasmania to provide primary healthcare in the southern regions of the Huon Valley, Tasman Peninsula and Bruny Island, adding to services already provided in the local government areas of George Town, Dorset, Flinders Island, Break O'Day and Glamorgan Spring Bay.



This will lead to expansion of the current RFDS Tasmania workforce of 38 individuals around the state and complements the opening of a new office in Hobart by Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC on Tuesday, February 5 at Government House.

Dental outreach services, funded by the Commonwealth Government and RFDS supporters, began in Circular Head in 2017 and since then 1504 patients have been seen and 17,507 treatments provided.

The award-winning dental program has transitioned from Tasmania's North-West to the North-East and East Coast and is seeing patients in the local schools, Scottsdale and Swansea.

"These services provide a coordinated and integrated approach to prevention and optimal management of chronic health conditions in the community," RFDS Tasmania president Malcolm White said.

"Services, which commenced in 2017, include supporting people with mental illness, dementia and cardiopulmonary conditions. We have now seen 339 clients and provided 3273 occasions of service in the past financial year.

"A new mental health service designed specifically for teenagers will be rolled out in the new year on the West Coast."

Education has also been high on the priority list for RFDS Tasmania, with six scholarships awarded last year bringing the total number of scholarships to 50.

The scholarships allow Tasmanian medical and nursing students and dental assistants to experience the work of the RFDS in rural and remote areas of Australia.

This year there will be a new scholarship, partnering with the Fairbrother Foundation, to assist a first-year nursing student from rural and remote areas, bringing the total to seven.

There has been an expansion of the RFDS education program to include in-school presentations and a Q&A session which last year reached 580 year 12 students.

This year these sessions will be integrated into Health Studies classes as part of the Health in Australia curriculum, concentrating, in particular, on the health inequities that the RFDS is working to address in remote and rural areas in Australia and Tasmania. These presentations are also used to promote careers in the health industry.

Hundreds of school children continue to visit the base in Launceston each term and an educational app for iPads was launched earlier last year as part of the RFDS Kids Club program.

Chief Executive Officer John Kirwan said that as RFDS Tasmania edges closer to its 60th anniversary next year, the organisation remains focused on the mission the Rev. John Flynn originally set - to provide a holistic model of primary care for rural and remote areas.

"Our ability to provide these services, particularly to fund the capital and equipment needed, is due to the support of our donors and supporters, and we thank them for this support," he said.

"We concluded last year, our 90th anniversary year, by once again being named Australia's Most Reputable Charity.

"This is the eight year in a row that the Flying Doctor has ranked first in the Reputation Index. The consistency of this result demonstrates the support and confidence in our service and reflects the generosity of our donors and volunteers who we rely on in so many ways."



Left: RFDS CEO John Kirwan with scholarship recipients Maddison Wall, Molly MacDonald and Paul O'Halloran.

Twin engines, twin cargo

by Lana Best

Three-year-old twins Ethan and Evan Foot reacted like most little boys when they saw the Beechcraft Kingair twin-engine plane in the RFDS Tasmania hangar at Launceston Airport.

Wide eyes, fingers pointing and tugging on their dad's hand to get closer, the excitement was obvious.

The recent visit to the base was a special one – involving three generations of the Foot family – all with strong ties to that single plane, getting together.

Tour leader was Greg Foot, the boys' grandfather and long-time mechanic for the plane as the base senior engineer.

He proudly lifted each child up for a closer look, helped them up the steps, and encouraged them to name parts of the aircraft.

The boys' father, Ben Foot, shared the show-and-tell duties. Ben is the terminal duty manager and senior operations officer at Hobart Airport – one of the main destinations for the plane with about 50 landings on the tarmac each week as patients are transported to specialist care at Royal Hobart Hospital.

And the twins, well they didn't have a clue how well connected they were to the plane, or how vital it was for their survival having flown on it the day they were born three years earlier to the day.

Ben and his partner Nicole were living and working on Flinders Island at the time and waiting patiently for the birth of the twins.

Nicole was booked to fly to mainland Tasmania on November 18, 2015, eight weeks before her due date, in readiness for the birth.

But one day earlier, at 5am, at 30 weeks' gestation, she went into labor.

Staff at the Flinders Island Multi Purpose Centre were able to confirm this was not the fake labor pains she had been experiencing previously and the RFDS was called in to fly Nicole to the Royal Hobart Hospital where a medical team of up to 30 (including anaesthetist, five specialists each for the babies and mum and nine or ten students) would be waiting.

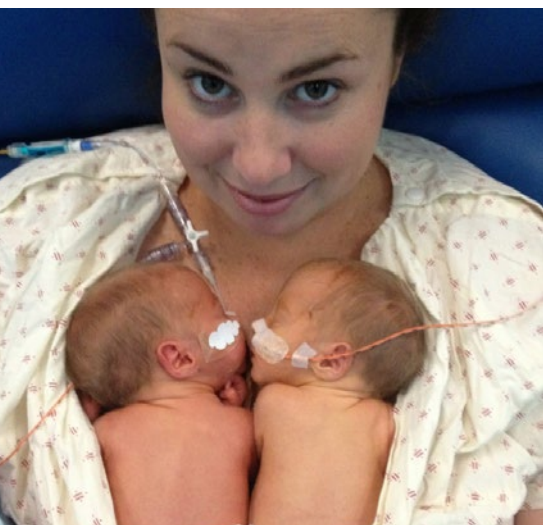
"That day I had scheduled a shut down of the runway for maintenance," Ben recalled.

Three years ago an RFDS plane left Flinders Island with a first-time mum in premature labor with twins – hoping that the birth would not take place in the air.

"I was on the phone pretty quick to have that reversed.

"And I phoned dad at the base to make sure he had the plane ready with no delays."

The flight from Flinders Is to Hobart took approximately 25 minutes, and like with most aeromedical retrievals every second counted.



Nicole Foot with the premature twins, born at 30 weeks' gestation.



The neo-natal emergency transport service (NETS) cot used to transport babies by land and air.



RFDS chief engineer Greg Foot, son Ben Foot and his children Ethan and Evan who visited the Launceston base to mark three years since their emergency flight from Flinders Island to Royal Hobart Hospital.

"We were told that the paramedics hesitated – if the boys were born mid-flight there was only resuscitation equipment for one baby.

"But staying was not an option because the facilities were not available on Flinders to handle two premature births either."

Pilot Cpt David Swiggs, Ambulance Tasmania paramedics James Sims and Peter James and extremely worried parents Ben and Nicole left the Bass Strait island hoping the twins would stay put in utero for a little longer.

With contractions just four minutes apart, Nicole said that getting onto the RFDS plane was a huge relief.

"Just knowing there was someone to help get me to hospital, and fast, was comforting," she said.

"It meant I could relax a little, concentrate on my breathing and try my best not to stress the babies."

The babies were born by emergency caesarian weighing 1.5kg each (three-and-a-half pounds) and put straight into intensive care.

Other than not being able to breath on their own and the occasional heart murmur, they experienced no other medical problems and continued to grow stronger every day.

After four weeks at RHH they were transferred to Launceston General Hospital in a customised neo-natal cot - lucky to be able to hitch a ride on the plane once again but this time as a backload from another patient delivery.

Such a successful outcome for two tiny new Tasmanians was due to the teamwork and skills of staff from Flinders Island MPC, Ambulance Tasmania, RFDS, RHH and LGH.

Ambulance officers, both flight and road paramedics, dispatch and coordination staff, nurses, doctors, pilots and the engineer supported by allied health,

cleaning, catering and administration staff all had a role to play and combined to make this a positive outcome.

"Even having worked at airports and with my dad working for the RFDS I still gained a greater appreciation of what a highly specialised service we had access to, for free, that day," Ben said.

"So many parents around Tasmania find themselves in a similar predicament where their baby comes early or is born with a medical problem and they need fast transport to specialists in Launceston, Hobart or Melbourne."

Ethan and Even were lucky to come through their rough start with no major issues and bringing them to the base to see the plane that was their first ever mode of transport was another great milestone and a source of great pride for their dad and grandad.

"And I'm not surprised that the kids love planes so much either," Ben laughed.



Baby Jenson

Coby can't remember how many times her son Jenson went a shade of blue during the first weeks of his life. The baby boy was born four months premature and had to fight to survive. After his long battle it was up to the Flying Doctor to bring him home.

"I was having a perfect pregnancy," says Coby, who lives with her husband, Dave, in Brisbane. "At 25 weeks I went to Melbourne for a friend's party. After I arrived I started to feel unwell so my friend took me to the hospital."

After being told she couldn't go home and that it was likely she'd go into labour in the next week, Coby and Dave's world turned upside down. The plan was to rest and try to delay the birth to at least 28 weeks, but that's not what happened. Her waters broke, four months early and half a country away from home, Coby went into labour.

Dave arrived at the hospital twenty minutes before Jenson was born – but the joy was overshadowed. Born prematurely, Jenson's lungs were underdeveloped and he needed breathing support.

"He weighed a tiny 762 grams, and because of his extreme prematurity his lungs were far from ready to breathe on their own", Coby says. Doctors had told Coby that her baby would only have an 80 percent chance of survival. "In the back of our minds, we were wondering whether he might be part of that other 20 percent," said Coby. "I don't think we heard him cry for weeks. That's the one thing you want to hear when your baby is born, but nothing about Jenson's birth was normal. When we eventually heard him cry, even though it was so soft and faint through the humidicrib, it was the best feeling.

His eyes were also fused shut for seven days, so it was pretty amazing when they opened for the first time."

After three months in a Melbourne hospital on breathing support, Jenson was stable enough to be medically transferred by the Flying Doctor in a neonatal unit to the Mater Mother's Hospital in Brisbane. However, transporting a patient as fragile as Jenson is a challenge. "We weren't sure how we were going to get home," Coby recalls.

Before the RFDS' team collected Coby and Jenson, she got a cold and was not able to fly with her family.

"After everything we'd been through I didn't want to risk making Jenson sick. He has chronic lung disease and his lungs can't handle any extra stress," she says. They decided that Dave was going to fly with Jenson.

"We met the RFDS team in Melbourne. Kate Dickinson was the Flight Nurse and Dave said he had nothing but a positive experience. Everyone was lovely and made sure he and Jenson were looked after the entire time."

"During his journey, Jenson needed steroids to help his lungs, you could see he was just so tired, his lungs were working so hard they started to collapse, he just wasn't improving and was really struggling," Coby explains.

But Jenson pulled through and when the Brisbane-bound RFDS aircraft

stopped for fuel in Dubbo, Jenson was given a special gift. RFDS Operations Coordinator Kendall Graham, who was instrumental in the behind-the-scenes organisation of the transfer, gave Kate a handmade quilt and toy RFDS aircraft to give to Jenson and his parents.

"We have wonderful supporters who make children sized quilts and donate them to the RFDS to be gifted to our younger patients," says Kate. "Each of them is unique, they are beautifully made and a lot of time and love goes into constructing them. The patients and their families love to receive them and they become a lasting memento of their time with the RFDS."

Coby says the gifts the RFDS gave her family are now a firm fixture in Jenson's bedroom.

"We couldn't have got home without the Flying Doctor. We can't say thank you enough and we appreciate the team being there for us when we needed them."

Even though Jenson is now doing well, readjusting to home life was slightly daunting for Coby and David.

"Apart from not being home for nearly four months and re-adjusting to life outside the hospital, it was a little scary. In hospital, he'd been hooked up to monitors with 24-hour care. I often still wake in the middle of the night to make sure he is breathing."

"Jenson now weighs over five kilos. We have to be careful because of his chronic lung disease and we won't know if he's going to have other issues until he gets older. But at the moment he's thriving and doing well."

To stay healthy, Jenson sees a dietician, occupational therapist, speech therapist and physiotherapist every month. He also has regular check-ups with his paediatrician.

By sharing her story, Coby hopes to raise awareness of the amazing work neonatal intensive care units and organisations like the Royal Flying Doctor Service do to help sick babies.



Dead reckoning

RFDS Tasmania emeritus board member Lindsay Millar OAM recalls the early days of our service.

Before there were radios, beacons and accurate maps, RFDS pilots flew by time, instinct and sight, often referring to whatever landmarks were below.

Dead reckoning was relying on estimated speed and time to hone in on a location. The "dead" part simply meant "straight", as in the nautical "dead ahead".



Lake Pedder beach an unusual airstrip

One of the most unusual airstrips used in the early days of the RFDS in Tasmania was the beach at the original Lake Pedder in South-West Tasmania.

Lake Pedder was close to Mt Anne and the Western Arthur Ranges, both popular walking areas and the wide, flat, white quartz beach on the shallow eastern side of the lake provided a well used access for bushwalkers to be able to fly in.

The beach was exposed each summer as the lake level fell.

In addition to providing general access, the beach was often used by RFDS aircraft to rescue injured bushwalkers from the area, saving them from having to be carried over long rough tracks to safety.

The beach, which was also used as a base for search and rescue operations in

summer, was up to 2km long, 300m wide and the water was very shallow.

Stories abound of bushwalkers taking the opportunity for a 'skinny-dip' but after reaching the water another 100m or so was required to reach waist level.

The sound of a light aircraft arriving would lead to an embarrassing and lengthy scurry across the sand to retrieve clothing.

The lake was also a popular picnic spot for those who were able to fly in to the site.

Pictured are two Tasmanian Aero Club 6-seat Piper Cherokees on the beach in 1970 (VH-TAT and TLT).

On the day that the photograph was taken members were having a very pleasant picnic lunch on the bank of Maria Creek.

Suddenly two elderly passengers let out a scream and jumped up as a big tiger snake had decided to join them on their rug. I guess that as this area was his home he had right of way!

Both these aircraft were used by RFDS Tasmania from 1964.

They provided a big advance over previous 4-seat aircraft. The cabin provided a large door, room for a pilot, a stretcher and up to three seats or more plus medical equipment as required to support the patient.

Due to flooding by the H.E.C. in the 70s to provide additional water to the Gordon River Scheme Pedder Beach is now permanently under water.

Aviation pioneer returns to home state

Last edition we brought you the amazing story of 93-year-old Anne Lewis of Burnie and her life as an aviation pioneer.

Anne was the first female pilot to obtain her commercial licence in Western Australia and the first to fly for the Australian Aerial Medical Service, later to become the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Late last year she returned to WA for a family function and took the opportunity to call into the RFDS Jandakot base where she was able to welcome the newest PC-12 'Isla' to the fleet.

Anne was warmly welcomed and treated like aviation royalty, and a young pilot soon had her soaring over Rottnest Island.

But the biggest surprise was yet to come.

Anne was presented with her RFDS wings and pilot's uniform – 70 years after she first flew for the service.

"In my day the uniform was a broad brimmed hat and stout shoes in case I had to walk anywhere!" she said.

"I was amazed at how big the Jandakot base was – it's hard to believe the quaint little operation I started with, which charged a shilling an hour to transport patients, is now the third largest airline in Australia."

At the age of 18 (1944) Anne joined the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) and spent two years as an aircraft electrician.

With a father who previously had flown with the Australian Flying Corps in WW1, and a brother who was a pilot, Anne was also intent on obtaining her own licence.

Upon her discharge from the WRAAF, Anne trained in a Tiger Moth.

Before deciding to train for her commercial licence, Anne built up her hours flying in aerobatic competitions with the Royal Victorian Aero Club.

In 1949 she abandoned her studies in Melbourne and left for Western Australia where she became the first commercially licensed female pilot. By then, she had seven different types of aircraft on her licence.

Anne worked for Goldfields Airways, a charter company established by her father and based in Kalgoorlie.

It was here that Anne spent some time being on call for the Australian Aerial Medical Service, the original name for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Anne distinctly remembers her first flight for the service. The patient was picked up from the remote township of Laverton and taken to Kalgoorlie while suffering an impending breach birth.

In 1950, Anne joined the RAF in the United Kingdom. Wanting to help with the Korean war effort, Anne was unable to fly with the RAAF as there were no female pilots at that time.

After three years with the RAF, Anne joined Skyways, one of the largest charter companies in Europe, flying around the world with a fleet of some 28 aircraft.

Anne spent 10 years, visiting more than 100 countries, in a very male-dominated profession.

Flying an Avro York, a four-engine aircraft derived from the Lancaster Bomber of Dambuster fame, and with four Merlin engines, the aircraft could carry up to 56 passengers. During her years with Skyways, she flew as far north as Iceland, south to Adelaide, east to Tokyo and west to Jamaica.



“she became the first commercially licensed female pilot

Pilot Officer Lewis (the highest rank available to women at the time) was selected to represent WRAF women pilots in 1953 at the Royal Review of the RAF in Hampshire, where she was presented to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

After a reflective moment in Istanbul, Anne left Skyways and travelled north to the Hebrides. However by 1963, the cold weather became too much and Anne returned to Australia to an office job in Western Australia, where she remained until 1984 before retiring to Denmark on the South West Coast.

While visiting her niece in Burnie, in 2007, Anne made the decision to buy an apartment on the fourth floor of a new building with impressive views of Bass Strait.

And if you think Anne is content being only four floors up – you might be wrong.

She headed out to watch the local aero club in action recently and decided that flying two circuits with two touch-downs “wouldn't kill me”.

So she took to the skies with an instructor on board and completed two circuits and two touch-downs that she described as “pretty good”.





Celebrating 30 years of flying for RFDS

Senior base pilot Stanley Griffiths once flew a pregnant woman, due to give birth within the week, from outback New South Wales to Broken Hill Hospital where the only local obstetrician was based.

The next morning he was called to the same airfield with a medical team to retrieve a woman in labor. It turned out to be the same woman from the previous day, now heavily in labor.

"She apparently had got bored waiting in hospital so hitched a two-and-a-half hour car ride back home with friends," Capt. Griffiths recalled.

"The baby was born in flight as I circled Broken Hill airport waiting for the okay from the doctor to land."

This, and many other amazing stories, like taking off at night without runway lights (relying on car tail lights on one side for guidance) and landing on a highway only a wingspan wide between roadside fences, make up a colourful career of 30 years with the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Capt. Griffiths even had a stint flying the famous GAF Nomad VH-MSF (Mike Sierra Foxtrot) used in the television drama *The Flying Doctors*.

The long service milestone was formally acknowledged at a cocktail party in December where RFDS South Eastern

section CEO Greg Sam presented Capt. Griffiths with a certificate and gift surrounded by colleagues, family and friends.

Capt. Griffiths originally started work on Tasmania's North-West Coast with Astral Airways under the guidance of Kevin Swiggs, father of one of our current pilots David Swiggs.

Various jobs like flying instructing and corporate pilot duties for the late agriculture pioneer and thoroughbred owner David Yaxley preceded a position with Par Avion, which was formed by a group of Hobart doctors to introduce an aeromedical service into the state.

Head hunted by SP Aviation, Capt. Griffiths continued his aeromedical retrievals (this operation was partly funded by RFDS) right through the contract changeover to Airlines of Tasmania.

During his time with SP Aviation Capt. Griffiths flew the first night medical retrieval from St Helens which was then only a grass surface lit with kerosene flares.

Right from his school days Stan wanted to fly for the RFDS so he applied for a position with RFDS NSW Section, Broken Hill, and officially started the job on December 5, 1988.

That was the Bicentennial year for Australia and the 60th year for the RFDS.

"When I first arrived there they had difficulty keeping pilots, mainly because it was so remote and it was such a good stepping stone for the airlines," Capt. Griffiths said.

"The average pilot was only there for six months but I had already decided I wanted to stay in aeromedical because it was a style of flying I loved, especially being community based, plus I've never coped that well with long-haul international flights!"

After nine years criss-crossing the vast outback of NSW and now with a wife and two young children, Capt. Griffiths returned to his home state to head up the newly contracted Beech King Air. Two freshly endorsed King Air pilots Capt. David Swiggs and Capt. John Giffin joined his team at Launceston.

Today, 21 years later, there are seven pilots on roster servicing what is one of the busiest planes in the country and Capt. Griffiths continues to inspire and set the standard for new pilots coming up through the ranks.

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!



Holiday park patrons tuck into freshly made pancakes.

Pancakes fly for RFDS

Big4 St Helens Holiday Park is a caravan park with a difference – and becoming well known for its special Sunday pancake breakfasts!

Guests enjoy a delicious pancake cooked by managers Michelle and Dion Appleby and gold coin donations have been collected for Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania during the past few months.

“Our first one for RFDS was the biggest so far with \$102 raised – it was a great turnout,” Michelle said.

“It’s such a nice social morning and everyone starts the day on a high note, and it’s nice to know the money raised helps a service that is so well utilised right here in St Helens.”

All up the Applebys at Big4 St Helens and their hoards of pancake lovers have raised \$1242.50 for the RFDS.

The RFDS has been flying people who are seriously ill or injured on the East Coast out of St Helens since 1992.

Many have been road accident victims, divers with the bends and recreational fishermen.

It’s not unusual for two or three trips to be made there in a single day.



RFDS media, marketing, fundraising officer Julie Shelton (centre) accepts a donation of more than \$1200 from Michelle and Dion Appleby of Big4 St Helens Holiday Park.



RFDS Tasmania is set to roll out mental health services to new areas of the state and also to a younger age bracket covering age eight to teenagers.

Expansion of mental health services

Expanded access to mental health services in rural and remote parts of Tasmania will be rolled out in coming months as the Royal Flying Doctor Service extends its reach to Swansea, Bicheno, Orford, Zeehan and Strahan.

The new program, that will see mental health workers visit communities who previously faced long travel times to access services, was made possible with new funding announced last year by the Federal Government.

There will also be a new mental health initiative targeting troubled youth, from age eight upwards.

RFDS Tasmania CEO John Kirwan said “The Flying Doctor has a long history in caring for rural and remote residents with mental illness. In response to growing demand for extra services, the RFDS is now able to offer services to more communities.

“Remote Australians see mental health professionals on average at one fifth the rate of city people. Some parts of country Australia have no registered psychologists. Seeing a mental health worker can mean hours of travel, which is a barrier to getting help when it’s needed. The RFDS will now be able to visit more communities, and offer care where it’s not been available.”

The new mental health program will operate in addition to existing RFDS emergency services, primary health care services and dental programs.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, you can call Lifeline on 13 11 14, Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800, Mensline Australia on 1300 789 978 or the Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467.



Colleen Loone of Launceston with a few of her sentimental favourite teddies.

A tale of 21 teddies

If teddies could talk, what a fascinating tale they could tell.

How they were made, where they came from, who they have belonged to.

They could recount all the times they've been cuddled, tossed, lost and repaired.

Why that button eye never got replaced. Who stroked the tag until it frayed away.

How they ended up in the esky in the garage or used as a jockey on the family dog.

And if they belonged to Launceston's Colleen Loone, they could say they raised money for two local charities while being part of the difficult process of getting on with life after the death of a loved one.

Colleen lost her husband Trevor to cancer just over a year ago, and step by painful step she's learned to look for positive things in her life, take control and build her independence.

One of the things she did was sell the big caravan that she and Trevor had camped in for decades – and bought a tiny A-van that she can manage alone so she can still get around to her favourite camp sites with family and friends.

Having that cleansing but emotional clean-up in the house, filled with stuff for two, but too much for one, led her to downsize her teddy bear collection to just a few favourites.

"I had a bed covered with them – some that I'd made myself, some that I'd been gifted, some that I'd bought during my travels," she said.

"Due to having personal knowledge of the amazing work done by both the Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania and the Holman Clinic I decided to auction the teddies off and raise some money."

From 21 teddies who found themselves with new owners through Tulloch's Auctions, \$300 was raised and the money was split between the two charities.

RFDS Tasmania fundraising officer Lana Best said that these kinds of generous donations, no matter how large or small, are always welcome.

For more information about fundraising for the RFDS in Tasmania go to the website www.flyingdoctor.org.au or call Lana Best (Launceston) on 6391 0504 or Julie Shelton (Hobart) on 0417 211 847.



Branxholm Flower Show secretary Sue Naylor with committee member Cristine Kelly.

Bloomin' good effort from Branxholm

It's the sweet smell of success from the Branxholm Flower Show, not only with the stunning display of blooms on show but also with the money raised for charity from the modest entry fee charged to patrons.

The flower show, which has been going for 72 years, is held twice a year in February and September.

Money is raised from the \$2 entry fee, a raffle and afternoon tea, resulting in \$365 going to each of the Catholic and Anglican churches and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Show secretary Sue Naylor said that while entries were down slightly for the September show, support from the locals was as strong as ever.

"We wanted to support the RFDS - its mental health program in particular, because we know how hard things get for farmers, especially in times of drought," she said.

"Mental health workers have been in our area offering a free service that is invaluable for individuals and the wider community."

Importance of volunteers

Do you want to support the Royal Flying Doctor Service and have some time on your hands?

We are now registered with Volunteering Tasmania and have some interesting and varied roles coming up. You'll receive training in the area of your interest, an official RFDS volunteer shirt and our gratitude. It's a great way to learn more about this highly respected charity and do your bit to keep our planes in the air.

Some of the roles are suited to people who are comfortable driving a 4WD vehicle and towing our plane simulator to events, helping out with the organisation and promotion of events, manning our merchandise stand at events to raise money and talk to people about what we do. Volunteers are also required to assist our education officer to take tour groups through the base facility in Launceston and also spend time at the Launceston Library to research history in our archives.

For more information contact Lana Best on 6391 0504.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Come and say hi, buy some merchandise, make a donation, or chat to us about becoming a volunteer at these public events:

FEBRUARY 1-3
OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE
EXPO AT INVERESK

FEBRUARY 17
BANK OF US RUN THE
BRIDGE IN HOBART

FEBRUARY 24
WINGS AND THINGS IN
GEORGE TOWN

MARCH 2
WELLNESS EXPO IN
HOBART



Cover photos: Logan Richardson, 4, (front cover) and Jyhe Dolbey, 4, from the Ravenswood Discovery Early Learning Centre were recent visitors to the RFDS Launceston base.



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TASMANIA

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