



## Royal Flying Doctor Service

### THE MARKET

Australia is a vast continent, with one third of its population living in rural or remote areas. Those living in the city tend to take for granted the medical and health services that are available when needed, but country people do not have this luxury. Without tertiary hospitals and often not even the basic services of a General Practitioner or dentist, our city cousins have poorer health outcomes due to barriers to access basic health and emergency services.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) works to rectify this disparity – bringing emergency medical and primary health services to those that live, work and travel in country Australia.

With a fleet of 68 planes, 24 aerobases and over 100 road service vehicles – the RFDS is the world's largest aeromedical service with a waiting room of 7.1 million square kilometres.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service's mission is to provide excellence in aeromedical and primary health care across Australia. Utilizing hundreds of runways across the country, the Flying Doctor can bring an air-ambulance to people in need and transport them to a tertiary hospital. They also fly in doctors, nurses and specialists for regular GP clinics in areas that don't have access to a doctor. The Flying Doctor telehealth service brings help 24/7 to anyone needing to speak to a doctor, and a network of over 2,500 medical chests strategically



located across rural and remote areas, provide access to vitally needed pharmaceutical supplies is possible. Dental, health specialists, mental health provision as well as health education are all vital services that the RFDS provide to rural and remote Australia.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

Operating across vast distances, with unforgiving landscapes and harsh climates, the Flying Doctor recruits only the best pilots. Day-to-day operations for the RFDS include routinely having to use dirt runways with the danger of wildlife on the strip, and night landings with make shift lighting. In addition to their extensive aeronautical skills, RFDS pilots work closely with their clinical teams to assist in getting patients medical assistance as quickly as possible.

Highly trained flight nurses and doctors are competent to deal with any medical emergency as well as routine GP matters. Dentists, mental health care providers and also specialists are now part of the suite of services the Flying Doctor brings to rural and remote Australia. Often the same GP team will service several generations of a family or community.

Country Australian's rely on the Flying Doctor when they need it the most, and the RFDS consists of seven companies under a federated structure, working cooperatively to provide service Australia-wide.

### HISTORY

The RFDS has a rich and vibrant history, starting with the dream of Reverend John Flynn, Ordained in 1911, Flynn initially worked in rural and remote Australia setting up hostels and bush hospitals for pastoralists, miners, road workers, railway-men and other settlers. He witnessed the daily struggle of pioneers living in remote areas and his vision was to provide a 'mantle of safety' for people of

the bush.

On 15 May 1928, his dream became a reality when a long time supporter, H.V. McKay, left a large bequest for 'an aerial experiment'. This enabled Flynn to open the Australian Inland Mission Aerial Medical Service in Cloncurry, Queensland (later to be renamed the Royal Flying Doctor Service).

From that first flight in a single engine, fabric covered bi-plane, Flynn expanded the service to include the first telehealth services for those in the bush using the early radios of the time (which later lead to the establishment of the famous School of the Air, which still operates to this day).

The growth of the RFDS in those early days was rapid and soon reached right across our vast continent. By the late 1930's there were Sections of the RFDS operating in Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales, Northern Territory and of course Queensland, and by the 1950s the RFDS was acknowledged by former Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies as *"perhaps the single greatest contribution to the effective settlement of the far distant country that we have witnessed in our time"*.

The Flying Doctor received the charter of the Royal family in the mid 1950's.

From the 1960s the RFDS moved away from using aircraft contractors to instead progressively purchasing their own aircraft and employing pilots and engineers. Today, RFDS aeromedical teams play a vital role in bringing needed emergency and health services to those in country Australia.

### SERVICES

In the last year the RFDS had almost 300,000 patient contacts and flew more than 26 million kilometres -- that's the equivalent of 34 trips to the moon and back. In addition to their well-known emergency aeromedical services, the RFDS provides:





- Regular fly-in fly-out GP, nursing and allied health clinics to rural and remote communities;
- Air and road transfers between hospitals, particularly transferring patients from small hospitals to larger hospitals in regional centres or metropolitan areas;
- Over 3,000 medical chests in remote locations around Australia containing a range of pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical items. The chests are an important tool to enable RFDS medical practitioners to treat people on-site for many conditions and to provide necessary treatment for those requiring emergency evacuation;
- Tele-health phone consultations that can be a precursor to other RFDS activities such as aeromedical evacuations or treatment using medication from RFDS medical chests;
- Mental health services delivered by RFDS doctors at GP clinics and dedicated RFDS mental health professionals;
- Regular dental services using fly-in fly-out, mobile and outreach deliver models; and
- Health promotion and education programs



that seek to improve the health and lifestyles of people living in remote and rural Australia, such as the Healthy Living program in Central Australia that aims to help individuals and communities in remote areas adopt healthy dietary and exercise habits.

#### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The RFDS has established a small research team to respond to health outcome and clinical service needs in Australia and make publicly available RFDS clinical data and clinical research findings to contribute to public policy and clinical practice improvements.

In the last two years the RFDS has released research papers on 'Providing Aeromedical Care to Remote Indigenous Communities', 'Responding to Injuries in Remote and Rural Australia', 'Filling the Gap: Disparities in Oral Health Access and Outcomes' and most recently 'Mental Health in Remote and Rural Communities'. These are all available publicly through the RFDS website and have received extensive national media coverage.

#### PROMOTION

The Royal Flying Doctor Service receives funding from the Federal Government, from State Governments and also relies heavily on donations from corporate partners and individuals. A wide range of the latest medical equipment is needed to continue providing the best aeromedical service in the world. Donations are used to purchase specialist medical equipment, replace aircraft and deliver essential health services.

A national corporate partnership program also now exists, enabling select national brands that align with the RFDS values and ongoing work, to collaborate in a partnership to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

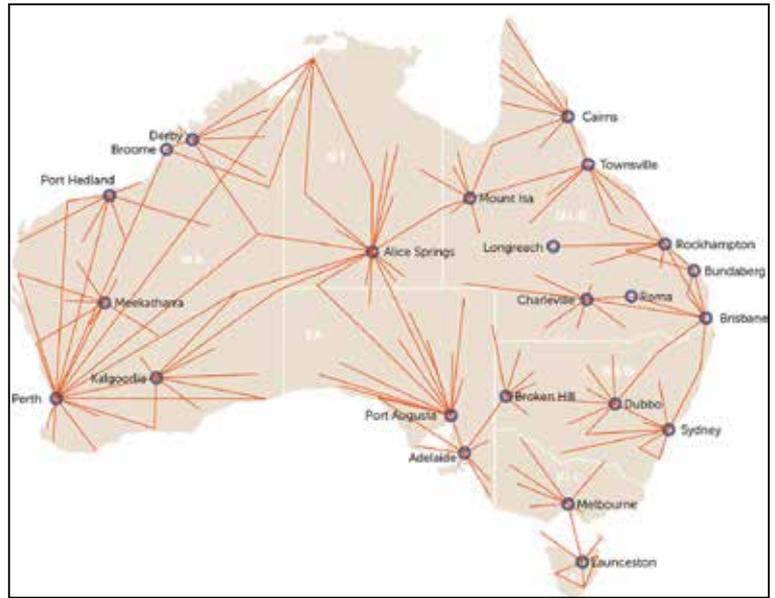
#### BRAND VALUES

The RFDS is a registered not-for-profit charity and has the charity tick from the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

Due to the vital nature of the work done around the country, the RFDS brand is held in very high regard by rural communities, businesses, families and individuals.

The annual AMR Charity Reputation Index surveys Australians to measure the overall reputation of the country's 40 largest charities and ranks them accordingly using a scoring system. The measurement also includes a range of dimensions of Services, Innovation, Workplace, Citizenship, Governance, Leadership and Cost Management.

For the sixth year in a row top honours went to the Royal Flying Doctors Service with the highest score of 96.9 out of possible 100 points, showing that providing vital health and emergency service that address the needs of vulnerable outback



communities resonates strongly with Australians. The Royal Flying Doctor Service also ranked first across all the individual measurements of Services, Innovation, Workplace, Citizenship, Governance, Leadership and Cost Management.

#### Key values that the Royal Flying Doctor Service teams follow are:

**Dedication:** RFDS staff teams are dedicated and passionate about bringing first class health and emergency services to people in the bush. The Flying Doctor is very much part of the communities it services.

**Integrity:** The challenges of health access outside Australia's cities make the Flying Doctor's services vital, and RFDS staff do everything possible to improve health outcomes and save lives.

**Innovation:** Operating across vast distances, harsh landscapes, and in far from ideal conditions, necessitates resilience, resourcefulness, innovation and a continual striving for excellence.

#### THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

- The current Australian \$20 note features John Flynn, the founder of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, as well as an image of one of the first planes, a pedal radio and a body chart once used to help in diagnosis.
- The RFDS is the 3rd largest airline in Australia with 68 planes in its fleet and operating across 24 aerobases and with over 1300 staff.
- You can see any Flying Doctor planes in flight through a Flight Map at [www.flyingdoctor.org.au/map](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au/map).
- The Flying Doctor is much more than an aeromedical emergency service, and also provides primary health services and patient road/air transport services to country Australia.
- The RFDS has been recognized by the World Guinness Book of Records as the largest aeromedical organization in the world.