



Tuesday 11 May 2010

Flying Doctor celebrates 82 years of saving lives

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) will this week celebrate 82 years of delivering the finest care to the furthest corners of Australia.

The Flying Doctor was established by the late Rev. John Flynn in May 1928 to deliver vital healthcare to the people of rural and remote Australia and this Saturday 15 May, marks the anniversary of the first RFDS flight from the Cloncurry to Julia Creek.

RFDS South Eastern Section executive director Capt Clyde Thomson says the Flying Doctor has come a long way since that historic first flight.

“The Flying Doctor is a quintessential part of life for many Australians, particularly those who live, work or travel in rural, regional and remote areas,” Mr Thomson said.

“Our first flight was conducted in a Qantas single engine, fabric covered bi-plane called ‘Victory’, with our first Flying Doctor, Dr Kenyon St Vincent Welch and our first pilot Captain Arthur Affleck on board.

“Today, 82 years later, we now have 21 bases, 53 aircraft and almost 1000 staff across the country who carry out nearly 36,000 emergency evacuations and treat over 270,000 patients nationally per year – that’s an average of one every two minutes,” Mr Thomson said.

In celebration of the anniversary, the RFDS South Eastern Section is holding a number of events over the coming weeks, including the educational Flying Doctor Day for primary school children on Friday 14 May and Base Open Day’s at RFDS locations: Bankstown and Launceston on Sunday 16 May and Dubbo on Sunday 23 May.

As 2010 also marks the centenary of the first powered flight in Australia, Owen Zupp, a Qantas pilot, author and aviation writer, is currently flying around Australia (including a flyover of the Sydney Harbour Bridge on Wednesday 19 May) to raise funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Mr Thomson says these events are designed to raise awareness about the Flying Doctor and the role that it has played throughout Australia’s history.

“It’s a little known fact that Rev. Flynn is considered so important to Australia that both he and the first RFDS aircraft, Victory, are featured on the \$20 note,” Mr Thomson said.

“We are very proud of our history, which is why we are inviting the community to celebrate this anniversary with us,” Mr Thomson said.

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For more information or photographs, contact Ruth Redfern, acting communications manager, RFDS (South Eastern Section) on 02 9941 8854, 0408 476 341 or ruth.redfern@rfdsse.org.au.