



Media Release

8 December 2014

Flying Doctor to honour over 60 years of service

For 86 years, one of the world's oldest aeromedical organisations, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), has saved lives and delivered vital primary healthcare to people in rural and remote Australia. For over 60 of those years, the RFDS South Eastern (SE) Section has been ably supported by the Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary which has raised over \$1.5m to support its life-saving operations.

In recognition of their tireless support and long service, an RFDS aircraft (call sign VH-MSH), will be re-named 'Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary' at a special ceremony at Broken Hill Base. His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), recently appointed Governor of New South Wales, will perform the naming ceremony on behalf of RFDS South Eastern (SE) Section of which he is Patron, on Monday, 15 December 2014.

"The members of the Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary have been stalwart supporters for almost as long as the RFDS has been in Broken Hill," said Greg Sam, Chief Executive Officer of the RFDS SE Section.

"The naming of an aircraft is a rare honour bestowed on patrons, supporters and those who have served the RFDS with distinction, as a token of our deep appreciation for their support and service."

"We are delighted to welcome our honoured guests, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley, Governor of New South Wales, Mrs Linda Hurley and the Member for Farrer, The Hon. Sussan Ley MP.

Recently, the Governor kindly accepted our invitation to become Patron of the RFDS SE Section, a role his predecessor Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO held with great distinction for 13 years," added Mr Sam.

The naming ceremony comes in the wake of the Auxiliary being named 2014 NSW Team Volunteer of the Year, an honour they received from The Hon. Victor Dominello MP, Minister for Citizenship and Communities, at an event at Kirribilli House, Sydney on 5 December.

This award recognises the contribution of a number of volunteers who have worked together on a common project or program for a not-for-profit organisation, community group, or other entity that engages volunteers.

"To be honoured once was surprising, but twice in a month is truly humbling," said Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary President, Margaret Symes.

"We are proud to have supported the Flying Doctor for more than 60 years and the naming of an RFDS aircraft after the Auxiliary is a great tribute to both our current and former members who have served through the years."

Formed in 1951 by a group of local wives and mothers to support the RFDS, the Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary are extremely active, organising an annual ball attended by around 1,000 people this year, holding raffles, street stalls and selling hampers. They raised over \$85,000 in the past year alone.

Although the red earth and hot temperatures in Broken Hill are about as far away from Santa's Grotto and the North Pole as you can get, the Auxiliary are best known for their delicious Christmas puddings that have become a Broken Hill tradition. A much sought after item, they always sell out quickly.

For two weeks every October since 1956, the Auxiliary women have taken up residence in a small room in a variety of locations, mixing, kneading and steaming over 200 puddings a day.

"Making 2,000 handmade puddings is always a huge challenge for our members, many in their 70s and 80s, but it's all for a great cause," said Margaret.

"Our puddings have been made the same way for almost half a century, using a secret recipe, which gives them a light, fluffy consistency, as opposed to the denser, heavier traditional puddings."

Fittingly, the aircraft, to be named 'Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary', will be based at the Broken Hill Base, where it will be used to help the RFDS in its mission to deliver the finest healthcare to the furthest corners of Australia.

"The Auxiliary exemplifies the Australian volunteering spirit, without which life in this wide brown land of ours would be infinitely harder and more perilous", said Mr Sam.

What: Aircraft naming ceremony in honour of more than 60 years of service to the RFDS by the Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary.

When: Monday, 15 December at 11.00am ACST

Who: His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd), Governor of New South Wales, and wife, Mrs Linda Hurley; Member for Farrer, The Hon. Sussan Ley MP; Ruth Sandow, Vice President of RFDS South Eastern Section; Members of The Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary, and Greg Sam, Chief Executive Officer, RFDS South Eastern Section.

Where: RFDS Broken Hill Base, Airport Rd, Broken Hill, NSW.

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For more information or photographs, contact:

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ABOUT THE ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

The not-for-profit Royal Flying Doctor Service has been taking the finest care to the furthest corners of Australia since 1928. The service provides 24 hour emergency cover to 90% of the Australian continent, via a modern fleet of specially equipped aircraft. In the past year, the South Eastern Section flew the equivalent of 6.25 round trips to the moon as it conducted over 5,000 clinics, took over 6,000 telehealth calls, had over 53,000 patient contacts and transported almost 8,400 patients.