The Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (RFDS) takes the finest care to the furthest corners of our land.

Established in 1928 by the Reverend John Flynn, the RFDS has grown to become the largest and most comprehensive aeromedical organisation of its kind in the world, delivering 24-hour emergency aeromedical and primary health care services to all those who live, work and travel throughout Australia.

Today, the RFDS conducts more than 290,000 patient consults across Australia every year – that’s one person every two minutes.

In Queensland, the RFDS currently operates from eight bases at Brisbane, Bundaberg, Cairns, Charleville, Longreach, Mount Isa, Rockhampton and Townsville. These bases form a strategic network of aeromedical services as well as help deliver a broad range of health care programs including general practice, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, child and family health, social and emotional wellbeing, women’s health, oral health and health promotion activities.

The RFDS is a not-for-profit organisation. While supported by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, the Flying Doctor relies heavily on fundraising and donations from the community to purchase and aeromedically fit-out our aircraft, purchase vital medical equipment and enhance our operational facilities.
Our Values

The values that underpin the work that we do include:

- **Care and Respect**: For patients, employees, communities and cultures
- **Reliable & Dependable**: Giving our best and fulfilling our promises
- **Safety & Quality**: Continuous improvement through evidence based practices
- **Socially & Ethically Responsible**: In all that we do
- **Collaboration**: With teamwork, we can make an impact
- **Innovation**: Encouraged and celebrated
Our mission is to provide excellence in aeromedical and primary health care across Queensland.

Our vision
The furthest corner.
The finest care.
Chairman’s Report

William Mellor Chairman, RFDS (Queensland Section) Board of Directors

The past twelve months have continued to be eventful for the RFDS (Queensland Section), with some long held ambitions finally materialising, several capital infrastructure projects on the cusp of being delivered, and some new initiatives being introduced to our Services.

While we have continued to experience a period of sustained demand for our traditionally government funded health care programs, we have launched some exciting new health initiatives of our own and invested in our future.

These new service initiatives and infrastructure projects included:

> the opening of our RFDS Charleville Health Clinic in October 2013
> the formation of a partnership with fellow NGO, St John Ambulance Qld, to enhance our medical chest program and allow us to contribute our expertise in the field of rural and remote first aid training programs
> the forming of a strategic alliance with Australian Helicopters to provide vital medical support to the Australian Defence Force during their important training manoeuvres in remote areas;
> our appointment as the lead agency for the Cairns based operations of national youth mental health foundation “headspace”, further testimony to our commitment to advance our footprint in this arena
> the building of a Hangar and Patient Transfer Facility at Roma Airport which will represent our ninth base in Queensland when completed in August 2014
> the start of our Charleville Base development which will consolidate our hangar, administration base and Visitor Centre into an impressive and brand new headquarters to be opened in October 2014 and
> the approval of a similar build project at our Rockhampton Base, due for completion in early 2015.

In my role as Chairman of our Queensland operations, I am privileged to represent Queensland on the National Board of the RFDS and see that, in many ways, we are leading the way with innovative programs across dental, indigenous health and primary health care delivery, an example being our chronic disease and mental health field days.

Our Queensland operations have an unparalleled diversity, seeing close to 90,000 people across a complex landscape of coastal and outback terrains, representing around 30% of the total patients positively impacted by the Flying Doctor nationally.

Delivery of these services remains an ongoing challenge for us, so despite enduring continued deficiencies in our operating income from traditional sources, we were still able to post this year, an operating surplus of $8.916 million only made possible by the continued generosity of our many donors and supporters.

This support enabled us to collectively raise $10.4 million in community support which has allowed us to invest in significant upgrades to our life saving medical equipment, help fund the purchase of two new aircraft, as well as enhancing and sometimes underwriting our remote clinical programs, which, with government funding alone, would not be sustainable.

On behalf of the Board, I’d like to specifically thank our Principal Sponsors, Ergon Energy Retail, Brisbane Airport Corporation and QCoal Group for their ongoing support, who together with other businesses, community groups, individual donors, bequestors and volunteer auxiliary groups, provide their own “mantle of safety” for the health services we are justifiably proud to deliver.

And in speaking of delivery, it’s most important that I acknowledge the unstinting and passionate efforts of both our frontline and administration staff, whose deeds, loyalty and commitment to patient care continues to inspire us all.

So on behalf of the Board, I thank our CEO, Nino Di Marco, his management team and all members of the RFDS Queensland family for their continued commitment to, and care of, all those across our State we are privileged to serve on a daily basis.
The 2013/2014 financial year proved to be another successful period of health service delivery for our Queensland operations, with sustainable demand for our 24/7 aeromedical services and primary health care programs and continued growth and emergence of some of our newer endeavours in the areas of dental health and community based general practice.

In the past year our RFDS teams:

> performed over 11,000 aeromedical patient transfers with over 1,000 being primary emergency evacuations
> conducted over 4,800 health clinics in remote communities stretching right across the State
> administered over 4,700 immunisations
> provided dental treatments to 1,800 patients across 10 rural and remote communities
> provided over 13,000 remote medical consultations by phone or video-link
> flew a total of 7.9 million kms in 24,095 hours flying time to deliver close to 90,000 patient consultations
> opened the much anticipated RFDS Charleville Health Clinic in October 2013, with this private practice now well established

> celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Mount Isa Base
> progressed Base infrastructure projects in both Roma and Charleville, with these new facilities nearing completion.

While continuing our quest to deliver the finest care to the furthest corner, this year we commenced a thorough review of our aviation fleet mix and in April purchased two new replacement aircraft that will become operational in late 2014. Both are B200 King Air aircraft and are earmarked to replace some of our current fleet in Mount Isa and Cairns respectively.

Over the next five years we plan to replace a further eight of our nineteen current aircraft due to either age or attainment of their optimal flying hours (being around 20,000 hours).

This replacement program will involve an assessment of a range of options including, the scheduling of our non-emergency patient transport obligations, the size and composition of the fleet and the capabilities required to meet our needs into the future and comply with a changing aviation regulatory environment.

In addition to our pursuit of greater efficiency in our aviation fleet, and while appreciative of both government and community support to help fund these important infrastructure needs, we are also empathetic to current fiscal pressures on the health system and the strain on government program funding.

In our dealings with both the Commonwealth and the State we recognise that the answer is often not solely attributable to a need for more money, but contingent on organisations being prepared to demonstrate and drive efficiencies of their own and to look for better ways to deliver care.

That is why this year we also embarked on an examination of our federally funded clinic program, looking for alternative transport platforms, better scheduling of our fly in/ fly out visits, exploring ways to introduce more Nurse Practitioners to ease the burden on our Medical Officers as well as looking to advances in telehealth and technology to provide further medical consults. With much of this exploratory work now having been undertaken, we are confident that over the next year we will be able to deliver improved health outcomes, reach out to more people in need and provide better value for the health dollar.
While striving for continuing improvement it is also important that we take time also to reflect upon our organisation’s growing legacy.

Rhiannon and Oscar – Clermont, Qld

Rhiannon went into labour three and a half months early. Rhiannon’s doctor knew that she needed to get to Townsville as soon as possible, to give her baby the best chance of survival, as he was just too young to make it without intensive care. Rhiannon’s doctor called the Flying Doctor and an aircraft was diverted to Clermont to pick up Rhiannon. Not long after arriving in Townsville little Oscar was born – impossibly tiny and weak, yet determined to live.

Rhiannon finds it hard to put into words her gratitude towards the Flying Doctor. “All I can say, is that when I held my child, who weighed less than a bottle of milk, and felt his tiny little heart beating against mine – I clung on to that moment, hoping Oscar would find the strength to fight for another day,” Rhiannon explained.

“He did find that strength. But he would never have even had the chance to grow and become who he is if it hadn’t been for that RFDS flight that got us to the hospital when we did.”

“I’m not sure there are adequate words to thank people who selflessly give to a service like this. ‘Thank you’ is just not enough.”
This year we also took the first of many steps towards an improved patient safety culture, by seeking National Quality Health Service Accreditation that we trust will lead to improved standards of clinical governance, better inter-agency patient record information management and ultimately a better continuum of care. This patient first initiative, which we have internally called PulSE, will place us in a strong position to continue our status as a preferred provider of rural and remote health care and allow us to partner more and more with like minded and similarly credentialed providers.

While striving for continuous improvement it is important that we take time to reflect upon our organisation’s growing legacy.

This year, one such opportunity presented itself, with the 50th anniversary celebration of our Mount Isa Base, not far from the spiritual home and birthplace of the Flying Doctor, the neighbouring town of Cloncurry. This event saw many past and present RFDS staff join several community leaders and local health service officials to reflect and share stories about the importance of the RFDS to this remote region. We were delighted to be joined by Her Excellency, The Honourable Ms Penelope Wensley AC, the then Governor of Queensland, in one of her last official duties as our Patron.

Another celebration, albeit of a service not long part of the Flying Doctor offerings, was the 1st anniversary of the QCoal Community Dental Service, which our Queensland team delivers in partnership with this, one of our major corporate benefactors. Members of our dental team, came together in the central Queensland mining town of Collinsville in early February, to celebrate the success of this initiative mobile dental service, which saw it visit 13 rural and remote communities across Queensland and provide corrective and preventative dental care to over 2,000 patients in its first twelve months.
Our people are our foundation. They exemplify the vision and values of the RFDS and are passionate about providing quality health care...
This year has also been one of renewed infrastructure, with the building of our 9th base in Roma, where a Patient Transfer Facility is in the final stages of development. This new facility will provide improved patient comfort for those being airlifted by visiting RFDS aircraft to and from tertiary hospitals and specialist services, as well as provide our aircraft and staff accommodation for our Roma based flight crew. Elsewhere, in Charleville, our new base and hangar development, which has been in the planning for several years, is nearing completion, which is exciting for all concerned. This new base will showcase a modern RFDS with its patient transfer/triage lounge, improved doctor and telehealth consult areas and substantial hangar space. We are also delighted to have retained a Visitor Centre as part of the new precinct, which we trust will be a popular tourist attraction and must see by those passing through this south west Queensland community.

Both of these projects have received considerable support from the Federal Government’s Health and Hospital Fund (HHF), so we acknowledge this support, together with that of the local community and shire councils.

**The Year Ahead**

With emerging and probable changes to the delivery of primary health care likely, as a result of the Federal Government’s dismantling of the Medicare Local networks, in favour of fewer and broader Primary Healthcare Networks (PHNs), we anticipate that there will be a growing number of opportunities for the RFDS to position itself as a viable health care provider to programs previously delivered by Medicare Locals.

We are also eagerly monitoring the progress of the Government’s national mental health reform agenda and review and are keen to preserve and broaden our current mental health programs, in particular those in drought stricken communities. The promotion of the effectiveness of our mental health field days and counselling services is an endeavour we hope will persuade public funding bodies to continue to invest in our services as well as provide opportunity for them to be expanded.

As for our core aeromedical retrieval operations, we will continue to invest in our infrastructure with further aircraft purchases and the opening of a Patient Transfer Facility at our Rockhampton Base early in 2015.

2015 also marks the 20th anniversary of operations at both our Rockhampton and Brisbane bases, with these two aviation hubs now of vital importance to our inter-hospital patient transport activities, under contract with the Queensland Government. We will be looking to celebrate these milestones throughout next year.

Together with the clinic review and our journey towards health service accreditation, next year promises to be another eventful and complex one, but one for which our loyal and dedicated staff are well prepared for and steadfast in their commitment to putting our patients first.
The Year's Highlights

celebration of 50th anniversary of Mount Isa Base

more than 4,800 health clinics across rural and remote communities stretching from the far north to the State's south west

RFDS delivered primary health care services to 130 Queensland communities

administered over 4,700 immunisations

over $8 million donated by Ergon Energy customers since 1999

$1 million from Brisbane Airport Corporation to offset airport landing fees since 2009
celebrated the 
3,000th dental patient 
treated by the QCoal Community Dental Service since it began in early 2013

23,214 landings

over 13,000 remote medical consults by phone or video-link

over 24,000 hours flying time

over 49,000 clinic consultations

7.9 million kilometres flown
2013/14 Overview

Health Services

The RFDS continued to experience sustained demand for its aeromedical and primary health care services, while exploring other avenues to contribute to the health and well being of those living and working throughout rural and remote Queensland.

This year has seen a significant focus on the safety and quality of our health services. A patient safety program was launched in November 2013 with the key message that Patient Safety: is Everybody’s Business (PuSE). As a guideline to help on this journey, the organisation commenced working towards achieving accreditation against the National Safety and Quality in Health Service Standards. This is a long journey of reflection that can only further strengthen the valuable services that are provided across regional, rural and remote Queensland. It is hoped that in early 2015 the RFDS will be ready for its first survey against these standards.

With a focus on diabetic retinopathy, the RFDS this year partnered with many organisations as part of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust Australia to improve retinal screening within the Indigenous populations of Queensland. The RFDS now has five retinal cameras that shift around our services to provide this valuable diagnostic opportunity. The service, known as IDEAS, also provides increased access to treatment through a purpose built, fully equipped and specially designed ophthalmic trailer that visits regional and rural hub sites to treat patients.

The QCQal Community Dental Service continues to provide services to rural and remote Queensland having now had its first birthday. In the 2013/14 year, this service saw 1,826 patients across 10 rural and remote communities that do not currently have easy access to oral health services. It provided 10,500 itemised services at an approximate value of $1.11 million to these communities, provided free of charge.

RFDS also continued to provide onsite medical support and retrieval services during the Australian Defence Force’s important combat training manoeuvres. In the 2013/14 year, RFDS provided support to eight manoeuvres and now has 12 intensive care paramedics and seven specialist medical officer on staff to provide this service.

The RFDS Charleville Health Clinic commenced operation on the 8 October 2013 and up to 30 June 2014 had provided 5290 consultations. This medical practice continues to explore options to enhance services to this community and has formed many relationships with visiting specialists to provide greater diversity in health care to the community.

Our expansion into the tertiary education sector also continued with our collaboration with Bond University launching its first intake of Graduate Diploma students this year. This follows the establishment of a Graduate Certificate in Retrieval Medicine in the previous 12 months. Preparations are now well underway for the commencement of the Masters component of this course which, when completed, will make it the only Australian fully nested post graduate program in Aeromedical Retrieval. To enhance our program further a full review of the STAR Program (Specialist Training in Aeromedical Retrieval) will also be undertaken as a pre-cursor to the tertiary studies, enabling participants to receive a credit towards the Bond University Graduate Certificate in Retrieval Medicine course.

Our organisation also commenced another important step forward this year by beginning an analysis of the requirements for an Integrated Health Information System. This will enable RFDS to have a clear picture of our needs in regard to electronic health information as a baseline to further enhancements in clinical information systems in future years. The analysis is scheduled to be completed in September 2014, as well as a roadmap for the organisation to continue its developments in this important space.

A special acknowledgement to the clinical staff that worked tirelessly throughout the year to initiate, develop and deliver these new project undertakings...
2013/14 Overview continued

Infrastructure Projects

The RFDS is looking forward to the conclusion of major construction projects in Charleville and Roma with completion in 2014.

New Aircraft

RFDS (Queensland Section) received $2.56 million in capital grants this financial year contributing to the acquisition of two new King Air B200s. The new aircraft will be operational in late 2014 and based in Mount Isa and Cairns.

Roma

The construction of a combined aircraft hangar, office and Patient Transfer Facility at the Roma Airport began and completion is expected during August, 2014. Our other bases currently service Roma almost daily with patient transfers, so this new facility will be a huge advantage to our operations in south-west Queensland. It will also provide excellent facilities for the Flying Specialists Service, currently run as an RFDS charter service, based in Roma. The RFDS (Queensland Section) received a $1.209 million capital grant which contributed to covering the cost of the development.

Charleville

A consolidated base administration and operations centre is expected to be open in Charleville in October 2014. Lanskey Constructions and DM2 Architecture have partnered with us in this work. The construction establishes a ‘signature’ design style now being incorporated across new development projects for the RFDS. Significant efficiencies are expected to be gained from co-location between the base activities and operations. A $2.208 million capital grant contributed to covering the cost of the development.

Rockhampton

The RFDS Board have approved the construction of a Patient Transfer Facility adjacent to the Rockhampton Base to improve patient care and safety. This will be built in partnership with DM2 Architecture and Lanskey Constructions and is expected to commence in the latter part of 2014 for an early 2015 completion.

Mount Isa Renovation Project

The RFDS partnered with Rotary e-club Next Gen in a renovation project of the employee housing owned by the RFDS in Mount Isa. This work is estimated to have saved the RFDS around $204,000.
This year the Human Resources team has had a large focus on the negotiation of Enterprise Agreements and assisting the organisation with employee and industrial relations matters. Excellent progress has been made in the Corporate Information and Privacy, Project Support Office and Workplace Health and Environment areas.

Key activities included:

- Negotiation and approval for Support Services and Health Professional Enterprise Agreements and Medical Officer Terms and Conditions.
- Implementation of the ‘Above and Beyond’ reward and recognition program which acknowledges individuals and teams on a quarterly basis. The first annual awards night was held recognising the Operational Employee of the Year, Support Employee of the Year, Team of the Year and the CEO Award for Excellence.
- Implementation of an e-recruit system which has streamlined recruitment and selection to ensure a more efficient and effective process.
- Workplace Gender Equality Act report lodgement and compliance.
- Implementation of a Wellness Program You@YourBest@RFDS with activities such as a Sunsafe promotion, Mental Toughness information sessions, nutritional advice sessions and cooking demonstrations.
- Introduction of WH&S educational workshops for representatives across the organisation.
- Implementation of regular WH&S workplace auditing.
- Implementation of OHS contractor management systems.
- Coordination of a revised and refreshed RFDS Queensland Section Strategic Plan along with its dissemination.
- Coordinating the PuSE project’s awareness and its associated communications amongst staff.
- Significant progress in enhancing organisational information management and compliance including further development of the Document Management Centre (DMC) and SharePoint functionality.
- Coordination of changes and compliance to our privacy practices to align with the new Privacy Act requirements and its amended principles.
- Development and planning for an Employment Engagement Project in the next financial year.

Our people are our foundation. They exemplify the vision and values of the RFDS and are passionate about providing quality health care to all those living, working and travelling in rural and remote Queensland.
Integrated Operations

The core responsibility of the Integrated Operations Team is to ensure the optimal delivery of health care services across the organisation. Key focus areas for the Integrated Operations Team include:

> Cost savings and efficiencies
> Maximising internal capability
> Developing new and innovative service delivery methodology
> Service sustainability
> Cross discipline collaboration
> Coalface empowerment
> Performance planning and benchmarking and
> Continuous quality improvement

We achieved this by exemplifying the core values and behaviours of the organisation.

Aircraft Replacement Program

A total of eight aircraft will require replacement over the next five years due to age and/or the number of flight hours being close to the total 20,000 hours (cycles) per aircraft.

Two aircraft were purchased in April 2014 for replacement at Cairns and Mount Isa bases. The fit out will take place in the FY 14/15 and will be completed by Hawker Pacific.

We will be entering into service agreements across all key main aviation suppliers to ensure maximum availability of our fleet across the state.

Charleville Health Clinic

The RFDS Charleville Health Clinic is our first General Practice Clinic. With health professionals employed by RFDS, the Clinic operates as a private, independent practice with patients claiming rebates through Medicare.

Our Clinic also engages with a range of health, community and disability services to plan and facilitate optimal patient care to patients whose health needs require integration with other services. Over this period, The RFDS Charleville Health Clinic conducted 5290 patient consultations.

QCoal Community Dental Service

The RFDS (Queensland Section) partnership with the QCoal Foundation continued to grow in this year. The QCoal Community Dental Service has continued to improve access to quality dental services for those in rural and remote areas. Over this period, the QCoal Community Dental Service recorded the following:

> Total number of individual patients: 1826
> Number of Indigenous patients: 24% of patients identified as Indigenous
> Communities visited: Dajarra, Camooweal, Richmond, Greenvale, Sapphire, Bowen, Theodore, Monto, Collinsville, and Winton (Total of 10 communities).

> Number of services provided: 10,500
> Total value of services provided: approx. $1.11 million

On the radar for the next twelve months

Efficiency Targets

> Optimise availability, efficiency and effectiveness of aviation assets
> Provide resources and advice to increase the effective and efficient tasking of aeromedical resources
> Develop a cost effective aviation fleet mix
> Implement maintenance and asset utilisation efficiencies through mobility
> Develop innovative workforce solutions
> Business intelligence drives evidence based business decisions

2013/14 Overview continued
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The RFDS Longreach Base is the only non-aviation base dedicated to providing mental health services to central Queensland. This year the Longreach team provided 467 clinics, conducting 1,121 patient consultations.
This financial year accomplishments of the BDU included:

> Development of a strategic partnership with Queensland Mines Rescue Service (QMRS) under a five year agreement.

> Development of the Medical First Responder (MFR) Training Program in collaboration with QMRS and St John Ambulance Queensland. The Medical First Responder program utilises the RFDS Flexible Learning Options (‘FLO’), an innovative learning platform that combines on-line theoretical content with hands-on practical sessions and assessments. The FLO platform is interactive with instructional videos and voiceovers rather than static PowerPoint or whiteboard presentations. This makes learning interesting, engaging and effective. The MFR Training Program will launch in August 2014 comprising of four key components that form a Medical First Responder Solution:

### 1. Training Courses

> Expert training from introductory level to advanced covering emergency response and trauma management

> Use of specialised medical equipment, preparation of critically injured patients for transport

> Training in mental health issues including Post-traumatic stress

### 2. Telehealth

> 24/7 access to the RFDS Telehealth service

### 3. The Medical First Responder (MFR) Bag

> Industry first specialised emergency and trauma equipment exclusive to the Medical First Responder program

### 4. The MFR App

> For Advanced course graduates, a series of quick reference guides of course content in an easy-access digital format.

> Operates on Android and iOS platforms and constantly updated ensuring current best-practice information.

> The appointment of RFDS (QLD) Services as the Lead Agency for headspace Cairns, after a successful tendering process. headspace is a nationwide program funded through the National Youth Mental Health Initiative focussed on improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 – 25. There are currently 55 headspace centres located around Australia which provide a drop in centre for young people where they can access free mental health, General Practitioner and vocational services. The headspace model is a consortium based model, managed by a Lead Agency that looks after the clinical, financial and operational management of the service. The RFDS will undertake a transition phase for the Lead Agency role which will officially commence on 1st September 2014.

> Provided consultation services to Central North West Queensland Medicare Local to review and provide comment on the primary health care requirements of the Mount Isa Region.

> Delivered our first Rural and Remote First Aid training session utilising the flexible learning options platform.

Business Development

The Business Development Unit (BDU) was established in 2011 to identify and source funding opportunities and income streams relating to RFDS that can be used to provide additional services and assist in reducing our financial deficit.
Marketing and Fundraising

The 2013/2014 financial year has been a highly successful one for the RFDS Queensland Section, with more than $10.4 million received in community support across the State, from an ever generous group of individual donors, bequestors, corporate supporters, community fundraisers and auxiliary support groups.

The support of these individuals and institutions has been particularly valuable during a period where there has been considerable health reform and resultant levels of uncertainty around funding at both a State and Federal level.

Our goal remains to ensure Queenslanders can continue to gain access to vital health services throughout the State when and where it is needed, regardless of where they live or work. Each donation brings us closer to this goal, helping us to improve the quality and breadth of our health care services - so we thank you for your continued support.

Thank you to our Principal Sponsors who have again maintained their commitment to RFDS.

Early in 2014, Ergon Energy celebrated its voluntary donation scheme’s achievement of $8 million in accumulated funds, since its inception in 1999, with close to 20% of their energy customers now contributing a small donation to the RFDS when paying their energy bill.

We were also pleased to see Brisbane Airport Corporation renew their support of the RFDS. This partnership is vital to us, given the strategic importance of being able to have an aviation presence in the State’s capital, which allows our aeromedical teams to be located in close proximity to many of our leading tertiary hospitals. In the past year there have been some 3,237 RFDS landings at Brisbane Airport.

The continued sponsorship support of mining company, QCoal Group, has enabled the RFDS to provide oral health services to over 1,826 patients across 10 rural and remote communities in the past year. Our QCoal Community Dental Service provided some 10,500 itemised dental services and procedures free of charge to these appreciative remote communities, at a cost of $1.1 million, made possible by this generous corporate benefactor.

We were also supported throughout the year by a growing number of community groups and events raising much needed funds for the Flying Doctor. These included the:

- Anglican Diocese of Brisbane’s annual Loaves & Fishes Luncheon held at St John’s Cathedral which raised over $54,000 in vital funds for a preventative oral health project in the Lower Gulf communities of Mornington Island and Doomadgee. The project will focus on addressing poor oral health standards in their child and adolescent populations.
- Iconic Birdsville Races continued its support of the Flying Doctor this year, having raised in excess of $150,000 during a long association. We are delighted that this support is set to continue well into the future, with the Birdsville Race Club formally recognising this with a recently signed official charity partnership.
- Ride West cycling challenge from Brisbane to Longreach, which raised $120,000 in support of our mental health and men’s health services with a particular focus on delivering services to remote communities impacted by drought. Now its third year this cycling event has raised over $450,000 for our health service.
- Mount Isa Rodeo Rotary Queen Quest competition that through this pageant raised vital funds and significant profile for our health services in the north west of the State. In 2014, our association with the Rodeo festival was heightened by our local Base’s 50th anniversary celebrations with some of the associated community events carrying a “Flying Doctor” theme.
- Forging of a close working relationship with Rotary International, specifically their e-Rotary Club, that provided significant in-kind support, including an army of volunteers at the Birdsville Races and assistance with renovation and refurbishment of staff accommodation and housing in Mount Isa.

Our medical equipment, health programs and infrastructure needs were also generously supported through the past twelve months by a number of philanthropic trusts and foundations. Projects such as Health Field Days, our Rockhampton Base Patient Transfer Facility building project and the purchase of several vital pieces of medical equipment received the support of the following funds:

- Cazaly’s Cairns Community Fund
- Thiess Bowen Basin Community Grants
- Gambling Community Benefit Fund
- Reef Hotel Casino Community Benefit Fund
- Breakwater Island Casino Community Benefit Fund
- Stanwell Power Station Community Fund
- Humpty Dumpty Foundation
- Annie Danks Trust
- Aussie Farmers Foundation
- Wesfarmers Curragh Community Funding
- RP Medical Fund managed by Perpetual
- Queensland Country Credit Union Community Grants
- The John Villiers Trust

Our thanks also goes to our Volunteer Auxiliary Groups who collectively raised $295,000 towards our operations, with these monies also able to contribute towards the purchase of medical equipment across our nine bases, meaning funds raised were able to support local operations.

As indicated earlier by the Chairman and CEO, this year has seen significant progress made on a number of infrastructure projects, with the new Charleville Base and Visitor Centre development and Roma Patient Transfer Facility nearing completion and plans now finalised for a similar facility in Rockhampton. These, together with the opening of the RFDS Charleville Health Clinic, the Mount Isa Base’s 50th anniversary celebration and the first anniversary of the QCoal Community Dental Unit, has meant the team has spent considerable time and energy ensuring that local stakeholder groups and media were successfully engaged. This heightened promotion and engagement approach is set to continue with many of these initiatives coming to fruition and the arrival of two new RFDS King Air aircraft into service late in 2014.
Aviation statistics for 2013/14

Number of landings 23,214
Hours flown 24,095
Kilometres flown 7,921,682
...I am sure that if I didn’t have the Flying Doctor there, I certainly wouldn’t be in the state I am in today and I most likely wouldn’t be here to tell the tale.
Michael – Augathella, Qld

27-year-old Michael was mustering cattle from a helicopter on his family property near Augathella, some 700 kilometres west of Brisbane, when he experienced engine trouble.

“I made an emergency landing but the skid wedged into the soil and rolled the machine over. The fuel tank split and exploded while I was still inside,” Michael explained.

Michael had burns to around 70 percent of his body and needed the care of a specialist burns unit in Brisbane.

“Without the Flying Doctor it would have taken eight hours by road to get me to a Brisbane hospital, (10 with the current roadworks) and at that time of the year the roads are often closed due to flooding, so I am not even sure that they would have been able to get through.”

After, six weeks in an induced coma, 16 major operations and almost four months in hospital, Michael is back working on the property.

“I am sure that if I didn’t have the Flying Doctor there, I certainly wouldn’t be in the state I am in today and I most likely wouldn’t be here to tell the tale.”
Telehealth consultations

RFDS Medical Officers provide a 24 hour medical consultation service (using telephones and radio transmission) to people living, working or travelling in remote and rural Queensland. RFDS Medical Officers also give advice to rural doctors, remote area nurses, allied health staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, patients and carers.

Many health facilities in rural and remote Queensland have video conferencing which continues to be integrated, along with other telehealth technologies, into rural and remote health service delivery.

No. of Telehealth calls: 13,140

Medical Chests

The contents from the Medical Chests are prescribed remotely and on-site by RFDS Medical Officers. Patients can be treated for a range of conditions including antibiotics for infections or pain relief to prepare for an emergency evacuation. Many people living in rural and remote locations find it comforting to have a Medical Chest close at hand. In Queensland, the RFDS is responsible for nearly 1,300 Medical Chests located throughout the state.

A significant review of the Medical Chest program has been undertaken across all RFDS sections this year to enhance the contents of the program and ensure they continue to meet the needs of people living and working in rural and remote areas. This review will also see the chests registered for the first time with the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Aeromedical and emergency services

All RFDS bases in Queensland, except Longreach, provide an aeromedical and emergency service. This service includes the provision of primary responses and the transport of patients between hospitals (inter-hospital transfers). This financial year, the RFDS conducted in excess of 11,000 patient transports including 1,008 primary response transports and 10,224 inter-hospital transfers to definitive hospital and/or specialist care. Aircraft are available to respond to calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at all bases except Longreach. Aircraft are staffed with a Pilot and Flight Nurse, and a Medical Officer if required.

Beechcraft Super King Air B200s and Pilatus PC-12 aircraft are used for retrieval work within Queensland. All aircraft are pressurised and configured to resemble mini intensive care units. Aircraft are fitted with either the Lifeport or TAS systems, which incorporate oxygen, suction and power outlets and are fitted in each retrieval aircraft, to act as a stretcher loading system that is fully compatible with road ambulance systems.

Inter-hospital transfers

Inter-hospital transfers involve the transport of patients between hospital facilities. This frequently occurs when further treatment or investigations are required for the patient, which are not available at the transferring facility. Transfer is therefore necessary to enable the patient to access the definitive care.

Inter-hospital transfers are coordinated through the Queensland Coordination Centre (QCC), a Queensland Government organisation. In Cairns, Charleville and Mount Isa bases, local clinical coordination is carried out by the on-call RFDS Medical Officer who also attends flights when a Medical Officer is required. In Brisbane, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Townsville, the RFDS provides aircraft, Pilots and Nurses and QCC organises doctors when they are required.

Inter-hospital transfers: 10,224

Primary response

A primary response involves the RFDS responding to a call from the scene. Usually this call comes direct to RFDS on its medical emergency lines. When calls go to the ambulance for these areas, the calls are referred to the RFDS. Primary responses occur when immediate first line treatment may not be available at the location of the patient. The RFDS provides telehealth support and management advice while flying to the scene, and then provides appropriate treatment upon arrival at the location, before retrieving the patient to the appropriate hospital. Isolated properties, remote health clinics or the scene of an accident are examples of possible retrieval locations.

Primary response evacuations: 1,008

Primary health care services

Primary health care has a broad focus and provides a comprehensive range of health services delivered by multidisciplinary teams. The teams include General Practitioners, Nurses, Allied Health Professionals and other health personnel including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Promotion and Community Development Officers.

> There are over 1200 RFDS Medical Chests located across Queensland.
The RFDS provides primary health care services at a range of locations such as rural towns, remote stations, mines and oil fields, national parks and island resorts throughout regional and remote Queensland.

RFDS aircraft (Pilatus PC-12s, Beechcraft King Air B200s and Cessna Caravans), charter aircraft and road vehicles facilitate the transportation of RFDS employees to deliver primary health care services to 130 Queensland communities.

The RFDS primary health care services include:

- General practice
- Child and family health
- Women’s health
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health including chronic disease management
- Mental health/social and emotional wellbeing
- Health promotion/community capacity building
- Allied health
- Oral health

General practice

RFDS Medical Officers provide a comprehensive general practice service and are able to offer or facilitate all aspects of primary medical care. Medical Officers are experienced in providing health services in a rural and remote setting and many have special interests and skills.

General practice clinics are held on a regular basis in remote locations; the frequency of visits depends on local needs. Outside the regular clinic service, primary medical care/ general practice is also provided as part of telephone consultations and RFDS Medical Chests are used to administer medication. Medical Officers work closely with other health professionals, both within and outside the RFDS, in order to provide the best quality care.

| General practice consultations | 19,375 |

Women’s general practice services

The RFDS recognises the needs of women living in rural and remote communities in Queensland and continually strives to develop ongoing strategies to improve access to services and information. One of these strategies is the Rural Women’s General Practitioner Service (RWGPS), which is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and the Queensland Government.

The overall aim of the program is to promote, maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of women living in rural and remote parts of Queensland, with specific objectives to:

- Provide female general practitioner services to rural and remote communities with little or no access to a resident female general practitioner
- Focus service delivery on preventative health care
- Cooperate with and complement existing local and visiting health care services
- Deliver services in such a way as to ensure continuity of client care
- Consider cultural diversity within communities and its influence on service delivery
- Regularly review service provision to ensure that services are being appropriately allocated to communities of greatest need

More than 50 locations across rural and remote Queensland are visited as part of the program. Many clinics are conducted in areas where the RFDS does not provide any other general practice service e.g. Torres Strait Islands.

| Women’s general practice consultations | 3,830 |

Child and family health

RFDS Nurses provide valuable support to families living in rural and remote Queensland. Through regular community visits nurses provide a comprehensive child health service incorporating:

- Routine physical assessments of children
- Childhood vaccinations
- Health education and advice to parents and carers
- Referral to other health professionals
- Counselling and acting as a confidante to parents and carers
- School health screening programs
- Liaison and collaboration with other child health initiatives
- Facilitating projects which enhance child health services

Vaccination rates of children living in areas where RFDS child health services are provided are some of the highest in the nation.

| Child and family health consultations | 11,624 |

Mental health

Mental health remains one of the critical areas of health need in the rural and remote settings. These areas are impacted by lower socio-economic indicators such as higher costs of living, lower education and higher unemployment.

In addition to this the limited access to services due to the availability of skilled professionals is compounded by low help-seeking behaviour, as a result of higher perceptions of stigma associated with mental health issues in these regions as compared with urban areas. Strategies aimed at overcoming these issues include:

- Development towards our own unique models of best practice, founded in evidence based models, and presentation of these to the wider mental health field
- Training of local Indigenous community members in community development and mental health
- Providing targeted assistance to areas experiencing specific issues, such as drought affected areas
- Working with other services such as schools and police to find new strategies to assist with key areas of concern

A range of other improvements to the service were also undertaken in the past twelve months. This year saw the rollout of a new outcome measures initiative.

These measures were able to demonstrate statistically significant improvement in wellbeing of clients across the Social and Emotional Wellbeing services provided to Cape York and Western Queensland out of the RFDS Cairns and Longreach bases. They also demonstrated the efficiency of those services provided by the Wellbeing Centres situated in Aurukun, Hope Vale, Coen and Mossman Gorge.

Enhancements are well under way to the Electronic Medical Records systems of the Wellbeing Centre service with rollout of this system to the broader services anticipated by the end of 2014.
The system has previously delivered a significant reduction in need for administration assistance with client record keeping and is expected to further reduce reliance on administration services once the rollout is complete.

The RFDS Mental Health Service remains committed to the enhancement of mental health services across rural and remote Queensland. Evidence of this was received in the latest instalment of the Health Outcomes International Evaluation of the Wellbeing Centre program in September with the evaluators expressing a strong commendation for the improvements in this service over the past twelve months. Commentary was received on the improved clinical governance of the service along with strong acknowledgement of the efficacy of service demonstrated by the positive outcome measure analysis congruent with that performed by the Wellbeing Service internally. Improvements in perceptions of Wellbeing Centre services were also reported broadly across external agencies and community members, indicating a significant improvement in the establishment of these services as a normal part of community life.

The RFDS Mental Health Service aims to be a leader in the field of Community-based Social and Emotional Wellbeing service delivery, and to this end is exploring partnerships with local service providers and tertiary institutions to undertake research projects to generate the evidence-base for the RFDS and the wider community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

In the primary health care context, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up approximately 40 per cent of RFDS patients, hence, the RFDS has an important role to play in improving the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The RFDS has a long term and sustained commitment to providing services into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in response to the issues that each community faces. Services provided include mental health, social emotional and wellbeing, primary health care, GP services, oral health, health promotion and child health.

Counselling and wellbeing programs

These programs provide social and emotional counselling services and community capacity building to rural and remote communities served. Many of the services are provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, as well as supporting rural communities. Activities under the program form part of the RFDS primary health care service, with multiple professional disciplines bringing complementary skills to the range of activities.

The RFDS also helps build capacity in indigenous communities by employing and training local people in providing services.

Health promotion

Health promotion is an essential aspect of the RFDS’s work, which underpins all of its primary health care services. Health promotion covers two broad areas: health promotion/illness prevention and community capacity building.

Health promotion and illness prevention

The RFDS Health Promotion program seeks to increase the integration of health promotion and illness prevention activities into the RFDS’s primary health care services.

A major ongoing commitment of RFDS has been the holding of health promotion field days at smaller locations, such as isolated stations/ properties, mining communities and tourist resorts. The field days involve community consultation, health education, skill development sessions and strengthening the relationship between the community and the RFDS. The field days have a focus on building skills to help people better manage health issues encountered in the remote context. The incorporation of health promotion activities into RFDS service delivery not only broadens the role of all health employees but also provides a more comprehensive health service to consumers.

Community capacity building

A relatively recent initiative of the RFDS has been to implement projects which aim to build community capacity around health issues. Objectives of these initiatives include:

> Increasing community awareness of the factors which create healthy lifestyles
> Strengthening the capacity of each community to identify and address issues of concern to them
> Increasing the level of participation in healthy activities.

The RFDS conducts a number of activities to ensure that health service delivery remains at the highest possible standard.

These activities include continuing professional development for employees, training and support of other health professionals, and service review and evaluation.

The Strength Within program was one key strategy undertaken in previous years to build the capacity within Indigenous communities in Cape York to respond to mental health needs. This was achieved through supporting local community members to gain a Certificate IV in Mental Health and Community Development (through RFDS delivering the course as well as supporting participants to undertake the program) and providing roles within their own community after completing the program. After having provided this program, RFDS now employs eight of the 24 participants who completed the program.
Our primary health care locations >

- General practice services
- Rural women’s general practice services
- Child and family health services
- Social and emotional wellbeing services
- Wellbeing Centres
- Community capacity building and training services
- Health promotion field days

Dedicated to taking the finest care to the furthest corners, the RFDS travelled to over 200 rural and remote locations across Queensland to provide primary health care services to those in need.
Our People

Josh Williams – Community Development Consultant, Mossman Gorge Wellbeing Centre

Josh Williams has worked for the RFDS at the Mossman Gorge Wellbeing Centre for five years as a Community Development Consultant.

“I am responsible for delivering culturally appropriate workshops and programs that meet the needs of the Mossman Gorge community.”

Josh’s role involves working with a wide range of age groups, engaging them in activities to help bring positive outcomes.

Having grown-up in Mossman Gorge region, Josh has seen first-hand the positive effect that the Wellbeing Centre has had on the community and wanted to contribute.

“I have witnessed such magical work and positive outcomes of the RFDS that I knew I wanted to work for the Flying Doctor and I love the work I do.”

Jonathan Le Poidevin – Aircraft Maintenance Supervisor, Cairns Base

Jonathan Le Poidevin is one of four full-time engineers that work for the RFDS in Queensland. Based in Cairns, Jonathan is responsible for the aircraft in Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa and Charleville, as well as fleet-wide avionics and modifications.

Jonathan keeps the RFDS fleet performing at a high standard, and along with the maintenance team supervises all aspects of aircraft maintenance to ensure airworthiness.

“I am grateful I have the opportunity at RFDS to use my aviation engineering skills to help our pilots, doctors and nurses reach those in need.”

Having worked for the Flying Doctor for five years, Jonathan enjoys the challenges of maintaining such a large fleet and the expansive geography they cover.

“The thing I enjoy most about my job is the diversity I gain in my role. I also work alongside a great team.”

I am grateful I have the opportunity at RFDS to use my aviation engineering skills to help our pilots, doctors and nurses reach those in need.
Joanne Faulkner – Base Manager, Bundaberg Base

As the Base Manager in Bundaberg, Joanne is responsible for a small administrative support team which provide administrative and logistical support for the Bundaberg Operational Crew, aircraft and facilities, as well as linking community supporters with the Base.

Joanne has been the RFDS Base Manager in Bundaberg for 12 years.

“RFDS is an iconic Australian organisation that has real meaning to people living in rural, regional and remote Queensland, and I love being a part of that.”

As Base Manager Joanne needs to be flexible as her role also involves working with a number of different departments including Marketing and Fundraising, Workplace Health and Safety, and Finance.

“Recently I spent some time working at our Charleville Base and really enjoyed seeing the difference between a traditional base, like Charleville, with its primary healthcare and aeromedical retrieval program, compared to the Bundaberg Base with its emphasis on inter-hospital patient transfers. It really highlighted for me the range of services that RFDS provides and the distances involved.”

RFDS is an iconic Australian organisation that has real meaning to people living in rural, regional and remote Queensland, and I love being a part of that.

Ian Odendaal – Principal Dentist, QCoal Community Dental Service

Ian joined the Flying Doctor last year as the Principal Dentist for the QCoal Community Dental Service. Working with a RFDS graduate dentist and three dental assistants, Ian and his team travel through rural Queensland providing free oral health care to those who need it most.

“I believe that everyone should have access to dental care, however, in some communities the sheer distance from dental services makes this very difficult.”

Ian and the dental team have experienced first-hand the need for the mobile dental service.

“One patient I saw was unwell and in hospital, so couldn’t travel to see a dentist but needed treatment. As we were positioned right next door to the hospital, we were able to help her and not interrupt her hospital treatment.”

As some people have not had access to dentistry for so long, Ian feels education is just as important as treatment.

“Poor oral health often impacts on a person’s general health but education can be the key to instilling good dental hygiene practices.”
Our Bases

In Queensland, the RFDS operates from eight bases including Brisbane, Bundaberg, Cairns, Charleville, Longreach, Mount Isa, Rockhampton and Townsville. Forming a strategic network across the state, these bases help deliver the finest health care to all those who live, work and travel in Queensland’s regional, rural and remote areas.

The RFDS Head Office is located at Bowen Hills, Brisbane.

Brisbane Base
Services provided: aeromedical and emergency services.
Number of aircraft: 1 Beechcraft King Air B200 and 1 Beechcraft King Air B200C.

Bundaberg Base
Commenced operations: 2002.
Services provided: aeromedical and emergency services.
Personnel employed: Flight Nurses, Pilots and Support Services employees.
Number of aircraft: 1 Beechcraft King Air B200.

Cairns Base
Commenced operations: 1972, following relocation from Charters Towers.
Services provided: telephone consultations, medical chests, aeromedical and emergency services and primary health care clinics incorporating general practice, child and family health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, chronic disease management, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, women’s health and health promotion.
Personnel employed: Medical Officers, Registered Nurses (Flight and Primary Health), Health Promotion Officers, Community Liaison and Development Consultants, Pilots and Support Services employees.
Number of aircraft: 2 Beechcraft King Air B200s, 1 Beechcraft King Air B200C and 2 Cessna Grand Caravan C208Bs.

Charleville Base
Commenced operations: 1943.
Services provided: telephone consultations, medical chests, aeromedical and emergency services, and primary health care clinics incorporating general practice, child and family health and health promotion.
Personnel employed: Medical Officers, Registered Nurses (Flight and Primary Health Care), a Health Promotion Officer, Pilots and Support Services employees.
Number of aircraft: 1 Pilatus PC-12.

Longreach Base
Services provided: mental health services and health promotion to people living in central western Queensland.
Personnel employed: Mental Health professionals, a Health Promotion Officer and Support Services employees.
Number of aircraft: 2 Beechcraft King Air B200s and 1 Beechcraft King Air B200C.

Mount Isa Base
Commenced operations: 1964, following relocation from Cloncurry.
Services provided: telephone consultations, medical chests, aeromedical and emergency services and primary health care clinics incorporating general practice, child and family health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, mental health and health promotion.
Personnel employed: Medical Officers, Flight Nurses, Child Health Workers, Community Liaison and Development Officers, Pilots and Support Services employees.
Number of aircraft: 2 Beechcraft King Air B200s and 1 Pilatus PC-12.

Rockhampton Base
Services provided: aeromedical and emergency services.
Personnel employed: Flight Nurses, Pilots and Support Services employees.
Number of aircraft: 2 Beechcraft King Air B200s.

Townsville Base
Commenced operations: 1996.
Services provided: aeromedical and emergency services and primary health care clinics incorporating general practice, child and family health and women’s health.
Personnel employed: Flight Nurses, Primary Health Care Nurse, Pilots and Support Services employees.
Number of aircraft: 1 Beechcraft King Air B200 and 1 Beechcraft King Air B200C.

...these bases help deliver the finest health care to all those who live, work and travel in Queensland’s regional, rural and remote areas.
Lori lives in a remote community with her family, and came horribly close to losing her baby son. When Kaleb was just 10 days old his heart began to fail. At the time, Lori’s hometown was cut off by the devastating floods, making the long journey by road to the Rockhampton Hospital simply impossible.

It was a truly desperate situation, and as Lori helplessly watched her beautiful baby slipping away from her, she feared he would die in her arms.

Thankfully, the local nurse that day recognised how seriously ill Kaleb was. She realised he needed to get to intensive care within hours, so she contacted the RFDS.

RFDS immediately deployed an aircraft and within a short time Lori and Kaleb were flown hundreds of kilometres over flooded countryside to Rockhampton Hospital’s NICU where he was stabilised before being flown by us to Brisbane for heart surgery.

Lori said she would be forever grateful for the help of the RFDS.

“Since being rescued by the RFDS Kaleb hasn’t looked back. Looking at him now you would have no idea of the difficult start he had to life.”

He’s one now, and Kaleb’s personality is starting to shine through. He tears around the floor, whether crawling or walking, and creates mayhem wherever he goes. Nothing gets the better of him, even if he has to try and try again he will sit for hours until he succeeds.”

“Words can’t express how grateful I am to the RFDS’ supporters. Without their generous donations I wouldn’t have been able to watch Kaleb grow from a helpless little baby to the fun loving toddler he is today. And I never forget that.”
Our Partners and Supporters

Funding Partners

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Australian Government Department of Health

Principal Sponsors

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BRISBANE AIRPORT AUSTRALIA
QCoal Group

Corporate Partners

THIESS
m+k Lawyers
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Rockhampton Regional Council
How you can help

To help meet the costs associated with running a 24 hour emergency and comprehensive health care service, the RFDS relies on the generosity of individuals, community groups, business and the corporate sector as well as funding provided by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

The money donated to the RFDS helps to:

- buy vital medical equipment
- purchase and medically fit out aircraft
- develop a range of outback and rural health initiatives

Please donate today:
- Mail to 12 Casuarina Street
  Brisbane Airport QLD 4008
- Call us on 1300 669 569
- Visit our website www.flyingdoctor.org.au

A.B.N. 80 009 663 478

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Royal Flying Doctor Service
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