



Royal Flying Doctor Service
The furthest corner. The finest care.

**For the Australian Institute of Company Directors
Profile piece by Grahame Marshall
RFDS CEO Western Operations**

Now, more than ever, not for profit organisations such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service must increasingly think commercially.

Like all not for profit businesses, the flying doctors need to anticipate and manage economic cycles that negatively impact on our fundraising, as we continue to rely heavily on the strong financial and in kind support of communities, individuals and the business sector as a vital contributor towards our ability to deliver essential life-saving services to those most in need.

Given the challenges of delivering 24 hour emergency medical services across our entire state, the RFDS must continue its long tradition of being innovative and efficient in the approach to meeting the needs of West Australians, both currently and into the future; particularly in regard to ensuring we utilise the very best aircraft, medical technology and equipment, and best trained and qualified staff, to assist and treat people, from the metropolitan area, right through to the furthest corners of WA.

The RFDS is now more commercially minded than ever before, and a proven leader in aero medical innovation and capability around the globe.

Last year we launched our Aero Medical capital raising Fund; designed to secure the long-term future of the RFDS, by continuing to improve our capability, and build a stronger and more sustainable foundation for our business into the future.

Last year was also our 80th year of operations in Western Australia and saw us deliver services to more West Australians than ever before in our history, evacuating 9,000 patients from areas all around the state, and that was challenging in a tough economic climate.

I believe, collectively speaking, that the charity sector overall still has a way to go in thinking and operating more commercially, and that the biggest challenges for not for profits, particularly during economic downturns, is being able to prove their effectiveness in terms of measurable outcomes, and their efficiency, in terms of cost and value for money.

During tough business cycles it is critical to not only manage the current challenges facing your business, but at the same time continue to focus on the future when taking operational and strategic decisions such as cutting overheads. For example, one of the first expenditures to be cut or reduced by many businesses in the face of cost or funding pressures is marketing, and whilst this may be necessary, we believe it is important to continue to invest in our long term RFDS brand and public recognition, to ensure that when the economic cycle turns we are still at the forefront of community and business thinking with regard to corporate partnerships, sponsorships, and donations.

It is also the right time for us to continue to invest in increased commercialisation through innovation leading to efficiencies in our business, which will reap dividends for our business into the future.

Here are a few examples of how we continue to anticipate and prepare for the future of our business and the needs of our patients; by the middle of this year we will open a new operating base in Broome, servicing the increasing population, and underpinning the ongoing economic development and growth in the North of our state.

Broome will be the first new RFDS base in WA in 50 years, and tangibly reflects our business philosophy of anticipating and recognizing future need and trends and responding early.

We recently developed and introduced an innovative bariatric stretcher and hydraulic loading and transport system designed specifically to lift and carry larger and heavier patients weighing up to 300 kilograms.

Transporting these patients over long distances in an aircraft - safely and comfortably, and ensuring the occupational health and safety of our staff - has been an emerging challenge that our team recognised and worked on with some of our corporate and commercial partners, to develop an innovative, bespoke solution to benefit many in the community.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service is embracing cutting edge technology not only in its aircraft, and in innovative ways to treat and manage patients, but also for the training of its medical staff required to have a broad and deep range of clinical skills given the variety of medical emergencies they encounter.

We have developed a Pilatus PC12 aero medical aircraft simulator on site at our Jandakot base, which is proving to be an excellent training tool.

The purpose built aircraft fuselage is identical to that of the Pilatus PC-12 aircraft that comprises 14 of the 15 aircraft in our current RFDS fleet.

The aero medical training simulator has now been incorporated into a fully equipped 'simulation centre,' which includes the use of medical mannequins, ultra sound, and a smart tablet interface system so that our medical staff can use "virtual" contemporary equipment to simulate "real life" training.

Just as airline pilots use flight simulators for their ongoing training and skills enhancement, the medical training simulator provides a very realistic environment so that our doctors and nurses can complete their training in the same conditions and environment as they manage their patients within, when in flight.

Our next step from this will be the establishment of a full Aero Medical Training Centre of Excellence where training for our medical and aviation staff is not only cutting edge, and world's best practice, but which will also deliver tangible cost and efficiency gains for our business.

The RFDS is without doubt, the most trusted pre-eminent service of its kind in the world and strives continually to lead the way – not only in saving lives but also in the way it operates effectively and efficiently, building on our core expertise in the areas of innovation, capability and leadership.

Donate to the RFDS call 1300 669 569 or check out www.flyingdoctor.org.au