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MEDIA RELEASE

WA RFDS NEW FLEET WORLD LEADER IN AERO MEDICAL SERVICES

The arrival of the Royal Flying Doctor Service second PC-24 jet in WA has now made its fleet the world leader in regional aero medical services.

The bespoke Pilatus aircraft also known as 'Kimberley' was flown over from Switzerland by WA pilot Lisa Roper-Campbell, the first female in the Southern Hemisphere to command the PC-24 jet aircraft.

RFDS Western Operations CEO Rebecca Tomkinson said the rest of the world was now looking to WA's next generation technology and capability, which is set to significantly improve health outcomes for those living, working and travelling in regional WA.

"Despite WA's size and the tyranny of distance, the arrival of this jet will ensure West Australian's can be guaranteed the best possible health outcomes, delivered no matter where they are," she said.

"Each PC-24 Rio Tinto LifeFlight jet has been designed by West Australians for West Australians, and we can be confident of providing a 'mantle of safety' for mine site workers, our farmers, people living in regional and remote communities, tourists and travellers alike.

"Lotterywest and the state government's commitment to this jet is a significant investment in the state's wider health and emergency services infrastructure and will increase our capabilities," Ms Tomkinson said.

'Kimberley' will be based in Broome to meet increased patient demand in the state's northern and remote regions while its sister jet 'Victory', which arrived in December last year, is based in Perth to cover the bottom-half of the state.

The jets have the capacity to carry three stretchered patients and two medical teams each consisting of a doctor and a nurse, and can travel speeds of more than 700 kilometres per hour, halving the flight time for long-haul patient critical scenarios.

The added capability and capacity of both jets when integrated with the RFDS' existing fleet of 16 PC-12 turboprop aircraft will boost overall fleet size and free up PC-12 resources to maintain a strong regional presence.

'Victory' officially entered into service on 21 January this year, and has since travelled 73,000 kilometres to reach 70 patients across the state – or 30 journeys, which is equivalent to approximately 44 flights on a PC-12 aircraft.

The acquisition and aero medical fit-out of the two LifeFlight PC-24 jets is an investment of \$26 million by the RFDS, partly funded by a \$10 million contribution from Rio Tinto, \$4.5 million from the Commonwealth Government and \$6.5 million from Lotterywest.

“As we look to the future, ensuring the sustainability of our essential service is of utmost priority and we will be seeking support from the wider public to help us fund the ongoing maintenance costs of our aircraft and for the purchase of essential medical equipment and supplies.

“I would like to extend my gratitude to all West Australians for their continued support in enabling us to deliver an essential service that belongs to anyone who lives, works or travels across our great state.”

Media Enquiries: Rebecca Munro

Facts and Stats

- The second LifeFlight PC-24 jet touched down in Perth from Switzerland on Friday, 22 February and stopped in Egypt, Oman, India, Singapore and Broome on its journey.
- In the last financial year, RFDS crews reached and provided in-flight medical care to 1,708 patients in the Kimberley region, averaging 33 patients, including six children a week.
- Each year in Western Australia, the RFDS will fly the equivalent of approximately 200 times around the world. Western Australia is the most remote health jurisdiction in the world.
- RFDS assists approximately 70,000 people a year through emergency medical retrieval, rural and remote GP, dental clinics and tele-health services.
- All RFDS flight nurses are qualified midwives.
- The RFDS responds to approximately 25 patients a day in locations as close to Perth to Rottneest and as far north as Kununurra.
- The additional capacity of the LifeFlight PC-24 jet aircraft to carry two neonatal cribs further strengthens the ‘mantle of safety’ for women and newborns living in remote and regional communities. The RFDS’ PC-12 turboprop aircraft has the capacity to carry one neonatal crib.

RFDS Bases

- Jandakot, Kalgoorlie, Meekatharra, Port Hedland and Broome
- The PC-24 jets will be housed at Jandakot and Broome

Current Fleet

- 16 PC-12 turboprop aircraft and two Rio Tinto LifeFlight PC-24 jets
- The Rio Tinto LifeFlight Hawker 800XP jet based out of Perth Airport was decommissioned in January after reaching nearly 2,500 patients during its ten years of service.
- Each aircraft is equipped with world-class aero medical equipment to support in-flight emergency equipment.