

Aeromedical, dental, and mental health bush boost

The Turnbull Government has expanded health care across country Australia, with \$327 million committed to the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (RFDS) today.

The four year funding, including \$84.1 million in new funding, will support continued fly and drive in medical, nursing, and dental services in remote areas, and a new national mental health program.

RFDS CEO Dr Martin Laverty said “All who live, work, and travel in country Australia can do so knowing the RFDS is on standby if needed, thanks to support of the Liberal-Nationals Government.

“RFDS cared for 335,000 Australians last year in the air, on the ground, or via telehealth. Our aeromedical and dental services now have certainty. We can now also deliver a new mental health service to underserved country areas in all States and the Northern Territory,” Dr Laverty said.

County Women’s Association of Australia (CWA) President Dorothy Coombe said “Our members need the RFDS. We’ve worked together in country areas for decades. The CWA is delighted the Prime Minister has delivered \$84.1 million extra to support RFDS in their essential country service.”

National Farmers Federation (NFF) CEO Tony Mahar said “Last year the NFF and RFDS surveyed farmers on what they needed most from health care. The answer was better access when needed, and mental health services in the bush. This new funding for the RFDS to do both is great.”

National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) CEO Mark Diamond said “The RFDS is not just about health care. Its twenty four hour service assures people in remote Australia that care is a short flight away. The funding enables remote communities to rely on the RFDS to fly to help when needed.”

Australian Dental Association (ADA) CEO Damian Mitsch said “Country areas have around one third the dentists of city areas. The RFDS dental program has expanded oral health care to country people. This Commonwealth support that opens up dental access in the bush is welcome.”

Mental Health Australia (MHA) CEO Frank Quinlan said “Remote Australians see mental health professionals at one fifth the rate of city people. Large parts of country Australia have no registered psychologists. This new funding for mental health care in remote Australia will help to fill that gap.”

Of the 335,000 people cared for in the last year, the RFDS delivered:

- 17,094 primary health care clinics in different remote locations
- 88,541 tele-health and video-health doctor and nurse consultations
- 10,832 episodes of dental care
- 36,799 air retrievals of patients
- 70,576 road transfers of patients

“This May marks 90 years of the RFDS overcoming barriers in access to health care for country Australians. The Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Rural Health Minister’s support enables the RFDS to continue working to improve health of country communities,” Dr Laverty said.

Dr Laverty thanked government Members and Senators who worked to support RFDS funding, and particularly Department of Health staff for their understanding of country Australia’s health needs.

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