

## MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 15 December 2014

### Construction begins on \$13 million Flying Doctor Base

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) will deliver its statewide inter-hospital transfer and emergency retrieval services from a new state-of-the-art aeromedical base at Adelaide Airport from the middle of 2016.

Preparation for construction of the \$13 million facility has begun at the greenfields site adjacent to the main runway (off Tapleys Hill Road) following final sign-off of the landmark project by the Board of RFDS Central Operations.

The new RFDS Adelaide Base will kickstart a wave of investment in what will become a world-class aeromedical precinct at Adelaide Airport, co-locating all members of the State Retrieval Service.

“The new Adelaide Base is a major investment by RFDS Central Operations into the well-being of all South Australians – city and country alike,” David Hills, Chairman of RFDS Central Operations, said today.

“After three years of planning, this is an exciting development in the history of the RFDS. Construction of the purpose-built medical and aviation facility will help the RFDS to deliver enhanced care for our patients, provide a modern and safe workplace for our staff, as well as increased flexibility and operational capacity to address future needs,” Mr Hills said.

“The RFDS is proud to be the impetus for – and foundation partner of – a new aeromedical precinct at Adelaide Airport, and excited at the prospect of strengthening our close working relationship with our state retrieval service partners in MedSTAR and SA Ambulance Service.

“Above all, the new facility will enable the RFDS to deliver the best possible 24/7 emergency aeromedical service to the people of South Australia for decades to come.”

Last year the RFDS transferred almost 4,500 patients through its existing base at the airport – a 12 per cent increase on a decade ago. It evacuated and transferred a further 1,800 patients from its RFDS Port Augusta Base.

The Minister for Health, the Hon Jack Snelling said the State Government is pleased to partner with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and is looking forward to the site becoming the base for all air medical services.

“When complete, the greenfields site will include all South Australian air retrieval services and ensure patients receive rapid medical assistance in an emergency where ever they are in the state,” Mr Snelling said.

Construction of the new Adelaide Base will be funded by fundraising and donations as part of the RFDS’ ongoing capital-raising program for the replacement of aircraft, medical equipment and upgrades to operational facilities.



Lead architect for the multi-functional facility has been Walter Brooke & Associates, while Sarah Constructions Pty Ltd was awarded the competitive tender for head contractor for its construction on Friday.

Adelaide Airport Managing Director, Mark Young, said the new RFDS Adelaide Base will play an integral role in Adelaide Airport delivering on its 30-year Vision for future growth.

“I congratulate RFDS on committing to the first major infrastructure project at Adelaide Airport since we announced our long term vision to grow the airport and provide an even greater contribution to the State’s economy,” Mr Young said.

“The RFDS’s commitment to provide the best possible emergency aeromedical services will only further enable the airport to realise its vision, to be a top tier airport business centre in the Asia Pacific.

“We have a longstanding partnership with the Adelaide Base through our Community Investment Program and consider them to be a vital part of the fabric of Adelaide Airport, making an incredible contribution to South Australia.”

The new RFDS Adelaide Base project follows last year’s signing of a nine-year contract agreement with the SA Government as the state’s fixed-wing provider of inter-hospital transfer and aeromedical retrieval services in SA.

“We have always been honoured to provide this important service to the community. The SA Government’s decision to confirm our tenure last year in this tangible manner meant we could move forward with investment in strategic projects such as the new RFDS Adelaide Base to enhance our capacity for the finest service delivery into the future,” said John Lynch, CEO of RFDS Central Operations.

The aviation section of the new facility includes a modern maintenance store and workshop with the capacity to hangar up to six RFDS aircraft, as well as parking of up to nine aircraft on the tarmac apron.

Features of the medical and patient transfer facility include time-critical design factors including private patient management bays with resuscitation capability, multiple undercover ambulance parking bays and two-way tarmac access for RFDS and ambulance crews.

“Our proposed design will enable us to streamline the patient transfer process and give us room to better accommodate operational staff working around the clock while improving internal efficiency by relocating all RFDS personnel currently spread across two locations to one modern premises,” Mr Lynch said.

“In SA alone, from our Adelaide and Port Augusta bases, the RFDS conducts an average of 15 aeromedical flights every day – many of these are the inter-hospital transfer of patients from rural and regional hospitals to Adelaide for emergency or specialist treatment,” Mr Lynch said.

The new Adelaide Base follows other necessary RFDS Base redevelopments completed over the past decade in Port Augusta and Alice Springs, both of which have delivered significant enhancements in patient care, modern and safe workplaces and operational efficiency.

## MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

- Since 1928, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) has provided 24-hour emergency medical services to those who live, work and travel throughout Australia.
- 1956 - RFDS Central Operations opened the Port Augusta Base to enhance its 'traditional' emergency aeromedical and primary health care services to outback SA.
- 1991 - the RFDS began inter-hospital patient transfer services between regional and city hospitals for the SA Government from its Port Augusta and Adelaide bases.
- June 2013 - the RFDS undertook its 100,000<sup>th</sup> inter-hospital patient transfer in SA.
- July 2013 - the RFDS and SA Government signed the first long-term service agreement (nine years) for the inter-hospital patient transfer service on a cost-recovery basis. Previously, this service had been renewed on an annual basis.
- The RFDS receives a mix of financial support from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, public donations and corporate sponsorships to deliver its of emergency aeromedical, primary health care, preventative health care and medical training services.
- The RFDS relies on fundraising initiatives and donations from the community to finance its capital-raising program, including the purchase and medical fit-out of its Pilatus PC-12 aircraft – at a cost of \$6 million each.
- In SA, the RFDS operates seven Pilatus PC12 aircraft across two aeromedical bases (Adelaide and Port Augusta), as well as manages one remote primary health facility (Marree Health Service).
- The RFDS provides 24/7 emergency aeromedical and essential primary health care services to around 24,000 South Australians every year.
- This means that **every 20 minutes**, somewhere in South Australia, the 'Flying Doctor' is assisting someone by:
  - an aeromedical evacuation of the sick or injured from a remote or outback location;
  - the aeromedical transfer of a patient from a regional to major metropolitan hospital;
  - immunising a child or consulting a patient at a remote 'fly-in' GP health clinic;
  - talking to someone face-to-face about a mental health issue;
  - transporting and facilitating the delivery of allied health services to country towns;
  - a consultation over the telephone with someone who has a RFDS Medical Chest;
  - access to a female GP in a town where there is no gender choice of local doctor;
  - delivering oral health care and dental treatment to outback communities; and
  - transporting a patient interstate for life-saving treatment such as an organ transplant.

## MEDIA CONTACT

**Kate Hannon** – Media & Communications Manager, RFDS Central Operations  
08 8238 3328 or 0407 522 510  
[kate.hannon@flyingdoctor.net](mailto:kate.hannon@flyingdoctor.net)