



Media Release

20 January 2016

NSW Health Minister renews Flying Doctor agreement

The Royal Flying Doctor Service's South Eastern Section (RFDS SE) will welcome the NSW Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner MP, to its Dubbo Base today where she will publically announce a new agreement with the RFDS SE for NSW Inter-hospital transfers, in place until June 2017.

Through the performance of this agreement the RFDS SE provides aircraft and crew (health and aviation) from its Dubbo and Broken Hill bases to transfer patients from one hospital to another when they need a higher level of care that is not available locally. The RFDS SE transported almost 8,500 patients across its service during the past year.

"The renewed agreement, worth approximately \$6 million per annum, represents a significant commitment by the NSW Government to the ongoing work of the Flying Doctor," said Ms Skinner.

"It means that the RFDS SE can continue to do what they do best – providing quality, safe care to those living in rural NSW.

"Importantly, the agreement strengthens the relationships between the RFDS SE and the key NSW Health partners, including Local Health Districts in Western and Far West NSW, and the NSW Ambulance Service.

"Improving the health of people living in rural areas is of paramount importance to the NSW Government, which is why we are investing in new models of care, services and facilities to help build healthy rural communities.

Chief Executive Officer RFDS SE Greg Sam welcomed the new agreement, which was signed late last year. "We are delighted that the Minister has seen fit to renew our agreement in the vital area of patient transfer, which is essential to the optimal functioning of the NSW health system," he said.

"Ensuring patients receive the specialist treatment they need, and are re-united with families in a timely manner once they have recovered, is a major logistical challenge in a country where a proportion of the population is so dispersed."

Continuing the theme of patient flow, the Minister will also have an opportunity to view one of the six Patient Transfer road vehicles situated in Sydney (Bankstown airport), Bourke, Cobar, Dubbo, Lightning Ridge and Orange. They allow the RFDS SE to move patients seamlessly between hospital and home or vice versa, offering patients greater continuity of care and more certainty of service, a more comfortable transfer on the same litter (stretcher) which are common to all RFDS aircraft and vehicles, with the same Flight Nurse attending where medical supervision is required.

"The new Patient Transfer road vehicles are an extension of the traditional aeromedical

service the Flying Doctor already offers to those living in remote, rural and regional areas,” said Mr Sam.

Mr Sam stressed that this new service is not a one-off, but an integral part of the RFDS SE 2015-19 strategic plan, whose principal aim is to reduce the well-documented gap in health and wellness between those living in remote, rural and regional areas and those in cities.

“In the past year, the South Eastern Section facilitated almost 5,000 clinics and had over 53,500 patient contacts. Our services are in high demand and we constantly review these to ensure that we are able to deliver services in the most efficient and effective way for patients,” said Mr Sam.

“The communities we serve remain at the heart of everything we do.”

Event Details:

**What: Announcement of NSW Inter-Hospital Transfer contract with RFDS SE.
Who: The Hon. Jillian Skinner MP, NSW Minister of Health; the Hon. Troy Grant MP, Deputy Premier of NSW; Greg Sam, CEO, RFDS SE; RFDS SE Pilot/ Flight Nurse and RFDS SE Patient Transfer road vehicle staff.
When: 2.45pm, Wednesday 20 January 2016,
Where: RFDS Dubbo Base, Dubbo City Regional Airport, Cooreena Rd, Dubbo NSW 2830.**

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For more information or photographs, please contact:
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ABOUT THE ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

The not-for-profit Royal Flying Doctor Service has been taking the finest care to the furthest corners of Australia since 1928. The service provides 24 hour emergency cover to 90% of the Australian continent, via a modern fleet of specially equipped aircraft. In the past year, the South Eastern Section facilitated almost 5,000 clinics, took over 6,400 telehealth calls, had over 53,500 patient contacts and transported almost 8,500 patients.