



Media Release

7 September 2015

## **The Flying Doctor to join the Priscilla Party**

The South Eastern Section of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS SE) will be joining in the fun at the upcoming Broken Hill Festival (11-13 September), which celebrates the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday of the classic Australian film *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*.

The three day festival celebrates mid-90's iconic road movie about three drag queens travelling through the Outback en route to an engagement in Alice Springs, which famously featured Broken Hill's iconic Palace Hotel.

The RFDS are embracing their role as the event's 'charity partner'. "We are delighted that the Palace Hotel has nominated the RFDS SE as charity partner for this inaugural event. This is a great way to be involved in a new community event, raise essential funds and awareness, as well as support bringing tourism to Broken Hill," said Brendon Smyth, General Manager Marketing and Fundraising, RFDS SE.

"The Flying Doctor is intertwined with Broken Hill's history and community. Broken Hill is home to the largest base in NSW, and many members of the community donate and raise vital funds so we can keep bringing essential healthcare services to rural and remote communities."

As well as providing healthcare to people who live and work remotely, the RFDS also sees the festival as an opportunity to communicate directly with people who are travelling remotely, some for the first time.

"Up to a quarter of emergency medical evacuations each year that the RFDS carries out across Australia are the result of city travellers who get into trouble on their Outback adventure," said Brendon.

Safe travel is a serious topic, but the Flying Doctor are embracing the ethos of the festival and will be taking a fun approach.

The RFDS SE will have their very own drag queen representative – Chris Harvey AKA Christina Kneesup - participating in the Drag on Drag Parade, a competition involving participants strutting the main street of Broken Hill in a Priscilla inspired outfit. Chris will spend five long hours transforming into Christina, with dedication to full hair and makeup.

"What a fabulous way to raise money! Everyone participating in the parade makes a donation entry, that goes to the RFDS" says Chris Harvey, Accounts Clerk. Chris is a Broken Hill local and says, "The RFDS is a great cause to support, and a real part of the

community. If I were a drag queen – injured and stranded in the desert – I know it’s the RFDS I would want to see!”

Besides the parade, the festival has a range of activities including live comedy, cabaret and drag shows there are a host of suitably off-beat events such as the Snitzel Crawl, Ping Pong, Confetti Shower and the Dancing Cupcakes.

The Flying Doctor will also be bringing their aeromedical simulator to the event, which is certain to be a popular attraction. It will be showcased amid the glam and glitter of the midday street parade along Broken Hill’s main street, which is free to the general public.

The RFDS SE simulator is a full-sized replica of the flight deck and fuselage of a RFDS King Air B200 aircraft. Measuring 9.1m long, 2.4m wide and 3m high and complete with flight deck and full aeromedical fit-out, it is a great way of engaging with the public.

On boarding the simulator visitors can sit in the pilot’s seat or in the rear of the cabin and experience what it’s like to be a RFDS pilot, flight nurse, or flying doctor. RFDS SE Education Officer, Sarah Little, will be on hand to explain the aircraft’s capabilities, what the medical equipment in these ‘flying intensive care units’ does and recount some real-life rescue stories.

“For those who want to learn more about the RFDS in Broken Hill we also invite everyone to our Bruce Langford Visitors’ Centre,” says Brendon.

“As the number one tourism attraction in the area on TripAdvisor, it’s a ‘must-do’ for everyone coming to Broken Hill. We have a viewing deck where you can see a working base, a museum and tour guides with amazing stories to share. It would be great to see some of the glitz and glamour from the festival come to the base, learn about the RFDS and take the knowledge home to Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and other major cities,” explains Brendon.

**What: RFDS SE aeromedical simulator at Broken Heel Festival.**

**Who: RFDS SE team.**

**When: Saturday 12 September 2015 11am onwards.**

**Where: Town square on Argent Street, Broken Hill NSW 2880. [www.bhfestival.com](http://www.bhfestival.com)**

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For more information or photographs, 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 conducted over 5,000 clinics, took over 6,000 telehealth calls, had over 53,000 patient contacts and transported almost 8,400 patients.