



Media Release

5 March 2018

Flying Doctor launches new GP mental health partnership

The Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section (RFDS SE) is launching a new mental health service partnership in Dubbo to help people with severe and complex mental health problems. Funded by the Western NSW Primary Health Network, the RFDS Mental Health Nurse Support Service will bring together the RFDS SE mental health team and local GPs.

“This partnership is essential because GPs often don’t have the specific resources to deal with such cases,” said Laurinne Campbell, Clinical Nurse Specialist in the RFDS SE’s mental health team.

“Studies also indicate that people living with mental illness are more likely to die early due to other physical health issues, their life expectancy being up to 30 per cent shorter¹.”

“Because there are few specialist facilities outside of the big cities, many end up in local hospitals and in-patient settings. The partnership with the GPs is about helping clients to stay well so they can participate in and contribute to their communities and reducing hospital admissions.”

The program will include: evidence-based therapeutic interventions, monitoring and comprehensive review of their mental and physical state, including biochemistry reviews, and regular case reviews with their GPs. Individual treatment plans will be tailored to the needs of each client who will be able to remain connected to their family and local community, which will aid their recovery.

The RFDS SE’s Mental Health team has established professional relationships with other service providers. These include; the Western New South Wales Local Health District (WNSW LHD) Community Mental Health Team, Marathon Health’s Strong Minds Mental Health Service for clients with mild to moderate illness and local specialised psychiatry services such as the State Wide Outreach Perinatal Service (SWOPS).

To get into the RFDS Mental Health Nurse Support Service program the client will need to be referred to the program by a Dubbo-based GP, have a diagnosable mental illness, be prepared to participate in therapeutic recommendations and review and not require an acute response. A referral will result in a response within 48 hours, after which the client will receive a comprehensive mental health assessment.

‘This program is aimed at people within the Dubbo catchment area and in order to continue to receive its benefits the client must reside within a two-hour drive of Dubbo and remain registered with their GP,’ said Laurinne.

Dr Ai-vee Chua is one of the

¹ *Premature Mortality Among Adults with Schizophrenia in the United States*, Offson et al JAMA Psychiatry Dec 2015
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26509694>

Dr Ai-vee Chua is the first Dubbo GP to start working with the RFDS SE on this new program.
“The benefit of partnering with the RFDS SE is greater collaboration and communication between the people managing the mental health of the patient.”

“This new partnership program is part of the ongoing RFDS SE strategy to reduce the gap in health and wellness between those living in remote, rural and regional areas and those in the cities.”

“During the past year the RFDS SE has established an Alcohol and Other Drugs partnership with Lyndon, which operates out of Dubbo, Cobar and Broken Hill along with other mental health clinicians. There are more programs in the pipeline.”

People experiencing mental health issues can also contact:

Lifeline:

NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511

Local Community Mental Health Service:

(Dubbo 02 68814000)

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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 facilitated almost 4,500 clinics, took over 5,500 telehealth calls, had over 49,100 patient contacts and transported almost 8,200 patients.