



Media Release

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Flying Doctor uses wings and wheels to expand dental health service

Although it has made its name as one of the world's first and most comprehensive aeromedical services, The Royal Flying Doctor Service, South Eastern Section (RFDS SE) is now using wings and wheels to help it improve dental health in the Central West of NSW.

A new dental van and an expansion of its dental health teams in Broken Hill and Dubbo are part of an ongoing strategy to reduce the gap in health and wellness between those living in remote, rural and regional areas and those in cities.

Dr Jenny Pham and Dr Terry Chao join the Dubbo team, which has enjoyed great success in restoring oral health to the communities of Bourke, Collarenebri, Goodooga and Lightning Ridge since it started operating in 2012.

"Our new five-ton truck is, in effect, a mobile dental clinic complete with chair, x-ray and all the equipment you find in a normal dentistry. It will visit schools and community centres to provide oral health education and treatment," said Dr Lyn Mayne, Senior Dentist at the RFDS SE.

"Existing fly-in clinics will operate as normal, but our new dental van enables us to extend oral healthcare to communities we don't currently serve and those who don't have airstrips."

"Better access to oral health services will help to improve the general health of people living in Far Western NSW, poor dental health being linked to other conditions such as, cardiovascular disease, stroke, low birth weight, pneumonia and diabetes."

A shared resource, the mobile dental clinic will move between the RFDS SE's bases at Dubbo and Broken Hill serving communities around both hubs and in between.

Currently in Dubbo, following its maiden trip from Broken Hill, the van has done a number of clinics in communities such as; Enngonia, Lightning Ridge, Goodooga and Angledool. On the way back to Broken Hill it will stop at Yunta and the Coombah Roadhouse.

"This first trip was all about bedding in the truck and the dental team, assessing dental needs and establishing a regular schedule," added Dr Mayne.

"As in 2012, when we started operating in the Central West, we see the need for dental services is great."

"In Enngonia we did checkups on 18 kids on the first day, 13 of which required multiple restorations and extractions."

“Amongst them was four year-old Heaven, who came with her father complaining of “black teeth.” Happily, we were able to restore her beautiful smile.”

Greg Sam, Chief Executive Officer of the RFDS SE, said that the Section was looking forward to providing dental services and oral health education to more people within the RFDS SE network.

“Special thanks must be given to the private donor whose generous support made the purchase and fit-out of this new dental van possible,” said Mr Sam.

“We are grateful for the incredible community support the RFDS SE receives, which helps us to deliver current services and provide new and expanded ones.”

The dental team will get to meet some of those fundraisers this Saturday, April 29. The Bright Smiles charity riders, who will be on the road raising money to support the RFDS SE dental program, will visit Dubbo Base to tour the facilities and inspect the dental van.

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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.

