



Media Release

04 February 2014

## **Flying Doctor kicks off 2014 by Welcoming Waratahs on board**

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) South Eastern Section has kicked off 2014 by unveiling a new charity partnership with the NSW Waratahs Rugby Club.

This 2014 season partnership will see two iconic organisations with strong community roots working together to improve the health and wellbeing of communities across NSW.

“We are delighted to announce that the RFDS South Eastern Section will be an official 2014 Charity Partner of the Waratahs. We look forward to working with the Club this year to help raise vital funds for our emergency and primary healthcare services across NSW, as well as enabling us to reach a new audience of supporters.” Said John Milhinch, President of RFDS South Eastern Section.

“Australia has a great sporting tradition and high-profile, elite sportsmen like the Waratahs do have great reach and influence, particularly in some of the demographic groups we are keen to reach.” Mr Milhinch said.

“I was also pleased to hear that some of the players were already passionate supporters of the Flying Doctor, having grown up in the bush.”

Like Waratahs and Wallabies scrum-half Nick Phipps. Recruited to the Sydney based Waratahs from the Melbourne Rebels at the end of last season, great things are predicted for 25 year-old Phipps, who has been part of the Wallabies set-up for the past five years, most recently on the European spring tour.

“I recently moved back to my home city Sydney and I really wanted to continue my association with the Flying Doctor, which I began in Melbourne. As an Ambassador for the RFDS Victoria section I was involved in promoting the RFDS in schools. I organised and ran rugby clinics at participating schools and helped to generate media coverage to raise awareness of just how vital the Flying Doctor is.”

“With 21 bases and 63 aircraft, more than 290,000 patients have benefited from RFDS services in the last year. That’s one person every two minutes.”

Although Nick went to school in Sydney his family is originally from Cunnamulla, in southern Queensland, where he spent 3-4 months on their property every year.

“My family have had a lot to do with the Flying Doctor in varying capacities, most memorably when my sister accidentally fell off a slippery dip and broke her arm. We had to call the RFDS, then grade the dirt airstrip so the aircraft could actually land,” said Nick.

“Very recently, one of my best mates’ Mum got trampled by a cow out in rural NSW and the Flying Doctor came to the rescue again.”

Waratahs Rugby CEO Jason Allen said, “The NSW Waratahs have a longstanding tradition of supporting the work of charities from across the community through our Tahs Together initiative.

“Our aim for this new charity partnership program is to build on this and provide a platform for rugby to make a real difference to a number of communities across NSW. We are very proud and privileged to work alongside these partners whose work is already making an incredible difference to the lives of so many people in NSW. We’re also really excited by some of the ideas and initiatives that are already in the pipeline for 2014.”

The not-for-profit RFDS takes the finest care to the furthest corners of Australia, delivering extensive primary healthcare and 24-hour emergency services to those who live, work and travel throughout Australia. With more than 290,000 patients benefiting from RFDS care every year, no patient is more than two hours away from the Flying Doctor’s help.

On top of the support the RFDS gets from the Commonwealth and state governments, the RFDS has to raise additional funds each year so it can continue to deliver and grow the range of healthcare services on offer in addition to its inter-hospital transfers and emergency retrieval work.

“I am proud to be a supporter of such a great Australian icon which is as relevant today as it was in 1928 when it was founded,” said Nick.

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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. No patient is more than two hours away from the Flying Doctor’s help. In the past year, the South Eastern Section flew the equivalent of 6.5 round trips to the moon as it conducted over 4,700 clinics, took over 5,000 telehealth calls, had over 54,000 patient contacts and transported almost 8,600 patients. The Royal Flying Doctor Service is a charity that relies heavily on fundraising and donations from the community to purchase and medically-equip its aircraft and to support other major health initiatives.