



Media Release

5 June 2017

Flying Doctor expands services to provide alcohol and other drug services

The *Mental Health in remote and rural communities* report released yesterday by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) <https://www.flyingdoctor.org.au/what-we-do/research/> challenges a long-held belief that people in regional, rural and remote areas have a higher prevalence of mental health illness than those in metropolitan areas. The RFDS research shows that while there is no difference in prevalence people living in rural and remote areas have a higher risk of more severe mental health illness because of insufficient early intervention and prevention services.

In response The Royal Flying Doctor Service, South Eastern Section (RFDS SE) is expanding its existing Alcohol and other Drugs (AoD) program. This follows a successful joint tender with Lyndon, an independent organisation with 30 years of experience in the field, for the provision of AoD services to Western NSW. The program is being funded through the Western NSW Department of Health's Primary Health Network for an initial 18 months.

The new program will see three AoD outreach services established in Cobar, Dubbo and Broken Hill.

"The RFDS SE mental health team, which includes an AoD worker, will grow from 5 to 15, which is a significant health investment in Western NSW," said Jenny Beach, Alcohol and other Drugs Program Coordinator at the RFDS SE.

"In addition, Lyndon will be employing a senior clinician and an addiction specialist, which will enable us to provide a full range of counselling, individual and family support, interventions and change, and referral services in the area of AoD.

"We're looking forward to working with our new partners in the wider mental health network to bring badly-needed quality care to those struggling with alcohol or dependency in Western NSW."

Alcohol and other Drug abuse is a growing problem in Western NSW, as is the lack of counselling and treatment options outside of the major cities. A 2013 national survey found that just over 40% of Australians either smoked daily, drank alcohol in ways that put them at risk of harm or used an illicit drug in the previous 12 months; 3.1% engaged in all three of these behaviours¹. People living in remote and very remote areas were twice as likely as people in major cities to smoke daily, drink alcohol in risky quantities, and use meth/amphetamines in the previous 12 months.²

¹ *National Drug Strategy Household Survey*, The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2013
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129549848>

² As 1

The RFDS SE will be responsible for managing the day-to-day service delivery of the new AoD program. Lyndon, who already offer specialist outreach, detox and rehabilitation programs throughout NSW, will provide program oversight, training and clinical supervision.

An AoD clinician and a community engagement worker will be based in each location. Initially, the workers will see clients who live within a two-hour drive of their base.

“This proactive partnership will work with local health professionals and other NGO’s on early intervention and to give people in Western NSW the support and services they need to turn their situation around,” said Greg Sam, Chief Executive Officer of the RFDS SE.

“The RFDS SE has made a number of significant service announcements such as this one in the past year, as part of our ongoing strategy to reduce the well-documented gap in health and wellbeing between those living in remote, rural and regional areas and the cities.”

Anyone needing help or advice, or wishing to refer a friend or relative can contact the program via two dedicated numbers 08 8080 3701 or 0447 610 846.

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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.