



Media Release

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‘Fly-Around Clinics’ to have greater schools focus

Once or twice a year a team of health professionals from the Royal Flying Doctor Service’s South Eastern Section (RFDS SE) fly in and out of remote locations, ensuring that scarce specialist health services reach some of the State’s most isolated communities. These so-called “Fly-Around” clinics (FAC) are in addition to the Section’s established clinic program, which took over 5,000 clinics to over 20 communities during the past year.

A new look FAC will take to the air on Monday, 19 October with a RFDS SE clinical team consisting of; a GP, women’s and children’s health nurse, mental health nurse, a dentist and dental therapist and a physiotherapist.

Their week-long clinic run will take them to five remote communities (Menindee, Wilcannia, Tibooburra, White Cliffs and Wanaaring) in Far Western NSW where a much greater emphasis will be placed on health education in schools.

“Recent FACs focused on men and women’s health and now it’s the kids’ turn,” said Dr Jared Kilday, who will lead the RFDS SE clinic team.

“Our main focus will be promoting healthy active lifestyles and behaviours such as; dental hygiene, healthy eating, active play/ sport and anti-bullying and cultural safety, which they will hopefully carry on into adulthood.”

“For example, in both White Cliffs and Tibooburra we will be doing a morning walk with the Flying Doctor to encourage people start each day in a healthy way.”

The FACs will be joined on the ground by the RFDS SE aeromedical simulator, which will be visiting six schools in five days and welcoming School of the Air students from outlying stations to join in and be part of the fun.

The simulator is a full-sized replica of the flight deck and fuselage of a RFDS King Air B200 aircraft, which measures 9.1m long, 2.4m wide and 3m high, it comes complete with flight deck and full aeromedical fit-out.

On boarding visitors 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.

“As well as teaching children about the work of the RFDS, we will be talking about what to do in an emergency as they might be the first responders on remote stations,” said Sarah.

“We will also be talking about healthy options because as well as helping people when they get ill, the Flying Doctor tries, through health education, to stop them getting sick in the first place.”

“It’s all about giving children a healthy start and getting them into good habits at an early age. Recent statistics showing that one in four children aged 5-17 years are now overweight or obese makes a compelling case for action.”

The educational simulator will visit the following schools:

October 19 - Menindee Central School
October 20 - Wilcannia Central School (am)
October 20 - St Theresa’s Community School, Wilcannia (pm)
October 21 - White Cliffs Primary School
October 22 - Tibooburra Outback School
October 23 – Wanarring Public School

“The other main difference from previous FACs is that they will now be based in remote Outback towns. They are the traditional meeting points for station folk and will make it easier for more people to attend,” said Dr Kilday.

“Logistically, it will also enable the RFDS team to get in and out of each location quickly, allow us to carry less equipment, as the local clinics are fully equipped, and be supported by road if necessary.”

The FAC clinical team offers locals a wide range of medical services. The GP can be treating patients for a range of complaints from orthopaedic problems to gastroenteritis and conducting ultrasounds, cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes screenings, while the dentist and dental therapist will be doing check-ups and filling teeth. While the physiotherapist is dealing with a range of joint and muscular problems, the mental health specialist is helping people deal with the unique pressures associated with living in remote communities.

“All our clinic services are based on the principles of primary healthcare, which is all about prevention, health and wellbeing, rather than just treating a disease. This involves getting the patient to look after their own health through education as well as screening and testing for chronic diseases,” said Judy Whitehead, Acting General Manager Health Services at RFDS SE.

“People’s access to healthcare shouldn’t be limited because they live in the Outback.”

“This is community healthcare at its best,” Ms Whitehead added.

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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 flew the equivalent of 6.25 round trips to the moon as it conducted over 5,000 clinics, took over 6,000 telehealth calls, had over 53,000 patient contacts and transported almost 8,400 patients.