



Media Release

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## **Flying Doctor Calls On Far West Males to ‘Man Up’ on Health Checks**

By giving a men’s health focus to their second “Fly Around Clinic” of 2014 the South Eastern Section of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) is hoping to overcome men’s natural reluctance to visit a doctor for a health check.

Fly Around Clinics allow a team of health professionals to fly in and out of isolated stations and towns once or twice each year, ensuring that scarce services reach some of the State’s most remote communities. They are in addition to the RFDS’s established clinic program, which took over 5,000 clinics to 18 communities during the past year.

The Men’s Health clinics will visit eight rural and remote locations in four days and will consist of: a RFDS senior medical officer looking after primary care, a registrar with a special interest in dermatology, a practice nurse, a psychologist and a drug and alcohol worker.

“Life expectancy of men in rural and remote areas is significantly less than those in metropolitan areas and less than women, due to higher rates of heart disease, skin cancer, lung cancer, diseases of the liver, accidents and suicide,” said Linda Cutler, General Manager of Health Services at RFDS South Eastern Section.

“Despite that men still adopt a ‘last resort’ approach when seeking medical help. “I’m fine ‘I’ll tough it out I don’t have time,” are excuses we hear every day. Well, we’re bringing the services to the Outback and calling on males in the Far West to ‘man up’ and get a health check.”

“The biggest barrier to improving men’s health is getting them to visit their doctor who will help increase their awareness of the all-important link between lifestyle and health and encourage early detection and treatment of disease.”

During this medical marathon the Fly Around Clinic team will set up in small clinics, dining rooms and bedrooms of stations and even in a local pub. While the GP is treating patients for a range of complaints from orthopaedic problems to gastroenteritis and conducting ultrasounds, cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes screenings, the registrar with his dermatology focus will treat skin problems, the mental health specialist will help people deal with the challenges associated with living in remote communities and the Drug and Alcohol Worker will be consulting on issues related to alcohol, tobacco and narcotics.

RFDS Medical Officer, Dr Jared Kilday, will be part of the Fly Around Clinic team and knows what sort of health issues are likely to arise during the four days.

“In previous screenings alcohol featured as an area of potential improvement for a number of men. I recall one man being concerned because he was drinking to take his mind off the drought and help him sleep,” said Dr Kilday.

“A number of men we saw should have followed up on existing health issues, such as heart and urological problems, but had lost contact with their medical practitioners.”

“High blood pressure was another issue and we recommended blood tests and other checks for those with a family history of heart disease or stroke or those who had never had their cholesterol checked.”

“All our clinic services are based on the principles of primary healthcare, which is all about prevention rather than just treating the disease. This is achieved by engaging the patient in looking after their own health through education as well as screening and testing for chronic diseases.”

This men’s health Fly Around Clinic, generously supported by the Collier Charitable Fund and the Baxter Charitable Foundation via Perpetual, leaves early on Monday, 17 November with the following schedule:

**Monday (November 17)** Morning - Ivanhoe; Afternoon - Pincally station

**Tuesday (November 18)** Morning - Tibooburra; Afternoon - Goodwood station

**Wednesday (November 19)** Morning - Wanaaring clinic; Afternoon – Shindy’s Inn, Louth

**Thursday (November 20)** Morning - Hungerford Royal Mail Hotel; Afternoon - Comeroo Station.

“People’s access to health services shouldn’t be limited because they live in a remote area. For the past 86 years the RFDS has dedicated itself to taking all kinds of healthcare, including specialist treatment, to where it’s needed most,” said Ms Cutler.

“This is community healthcare at its very best.”

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For more information or photographs, contact:

Nick Bleszynski, Media Consultant, RFDS (South Eastern Section) on 0403 931 291 or [nbleszynski@rfdse.org.au](mailto:nbleszynski@rfdse.org.au)

## **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.