



Media Release

22 December 2015

Flying Doctor on stand by over festive season

The Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section's (RFDS SE) bases operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will remain open throughout the festive period, ensuring they continue to deliver the finest aeromedical healthcare to the furthest corners of Australia.

Not only does the RFDS SE provide emergency retrieval and inter-hospital transfers via state-of-the-art medically equipped aircraft, they also provide an inter-hospital patient transfer service and extensive health clinics that include dental and mental health care, breast care, women & children, family health, midwifery, indigenous and preventative health programs.

"Christmas is a time of peace and goodwill, but, unfortunately, accidents still happen, people fall ill and do need medical help," said Linda Cutler, General Manager Health Services at RFDS South Eastern Section.

"RFDS flight crews work shifts all year round and really do treat it as just another working day."

"Last year, the RFDS SE flight crews were tasked to eight emergencies between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day for a range of serious conditions, including: broken and fractured bones, respiratory distress, lacerations, concussion and severe nausea."

Whatever this year throws up it is unlikely to top the New Year's Eve that medical Officer, Dr Victoria Bradley, spent at the Tibooburra Gymkhana and Rodeo.

"I was one of the emergency medical team called to attend a rodeo rider thrown by a bull. His hand had become trapped in the rein resulting in a badly dislocated shoulder," recalled Victoria.

"It was a difficult procedure, but the flight nurse and I managed to relocate his shoulder on the stroke of midnight, at which point a huge fireworks display lit up the sky - a novel way to see in the New Year."

"Once the fireworks were over we flew the rider back to Broken Hill with full spinal precautions for X-Rays and further examination."

"The RFDS wishes everyone a safe Christmas and trusts they will take special care over the extended holiday season," said Ms Cutler.

"When jumping on that new horse, motorbike or quad bike, don't forget to put on your helmets and safety gear and go safely."

It is an unfortunate statistic that up to a quarter of the emergency medical evacuations the RFDS perform each year involve city travellers getting into trouble on their Outback adventure.

Anyone across NSW and Australia who requires emergency services should dial 000 and be prepared to give their location. Residents in rural and remote areas are well prepared to do this while visitors often struggle. For those of you with a smartphone please consider downloading the 'Emergency +' app so you can turn it on when you do need to use 000. Switch off at other times to avoid draining your battery. The app will indicate your longitude and latitude and assist emergency services including the RFDS to find you. This app may work in some areas where there is no mobile voice coverage, but there is data coverage. If you don't have a smartphone, keep an eye on the crossroads as you travel and mark your journey on a map. If travelling to a remote area there may be no mobile coverage so please make a Satellite phone as part of your travel pack. You may need them in an emergency.

Holiday travel in more remote areas requires more planning as pharmacies, medical centres, shops and other amenities may be few and far between. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Get good quality maps and plan your route. Make sure someone knows your schedule.
- Be careful of how much you pack on your roof rack; a heavy load on top increases the chances of a roll-over.
- Store water in small containers instead of one large tank; check all water containers for leaks; if you're unused to the Outback, you may need one litre of water every hour; if active (eg walking, climbing etc.) you will need to consume additional water at regular intervals remember: don't wait to feel thirsty before taking a drink; most towns have water but, at some places, you may not be able to get drinking water; we recommend that in very hot conditions you carry 10 litres of water per person per day (don't rely on waterholes, dams, bores, mills, tanks or troughs and don't use soap or detergents in any natural water course or stock watering point).
- Carry a two-day food supply for each person travelling.
- Bring matches or a lighter and pack a fire extinguisher. Do not light fires in hazardous conditions.
- Get a summary of your medical history and bring all medication and repeat scripts with you.
- Do a first-aid course and pack a first aid kit.
- Take a hat, sunscreen and insect repellent.
- Wear clothing suitable for the climate; wear good walking shoes; take warmer clothes for the evenings.
- Try to avoid travelling during the hottest months of the year.
- Remember, if your car breaks down or you become lost, never leave your vehicle. Use it for shade and shelter and wait as it is easier to locate a missing vehicle in the Outback than a missing person.

- ENDS -

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 conducted almost 5,000 clinics, took over 6,400 telehealth calls, had over 53,500 patient contacts and transported almost 8,500 patients.