



Media Release

April 27 2015

Flying Doctor and the School of the Air join forces to safeguard the future

Two great Australian icons with strong historical connections, The Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section (RFDS SE) and the School of the Air (SOTA), will combine forces at a “mini-school” event at Bindarra station some 90 kilometres west of Broken Hill on April 27, 28 and 29.

Shearing sheds and outhouses are transformed into classrooms and accommodation for these twice-yearly events, hosted on rural properties by School of the Air families to bring together the 123 children currently enrolled through the Broken Hill SOTA campus.

During the next three days they will supplement their on-line and Interactive Distance Learning with some face-to-face teaching and activities with their “classmates.” The focus of this scout themed “Bindarra Jamboree” mini-school will be problem solving and team work. The RFDS will participate by running health and emergency education sessions.

“With 87 years of experience providing emergency evacuation and primary health services to rural and remote areas and a strong historical connection to remote education through School of the Air, the RFDS SE are delighted to be attending this important community event,” said Steve Martin, Base Manager at the RFDS Broken Hill.

“It’s great to be working with SOTA with whom we share a common interest in ensuring rural and remote children achieve their full potential by receiving the best academic and healthcare education available.”

“This kind of educational work is essential to maintaining the social fabric in Outback areas and retaining the existing population. The primary reason that the RFDS was founded was to enable people to settle in remote areas of Australia.”

Star attraction at Bindarra will be the RFDS SE aeromedical simulator fresh from its success at the Sydney Royal Easter Show where the RFDS stand was visited by more than 17,000 people and received a Silver Exhibitor award.

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

On boarding the aeromedical simulator visitors experience what it’s like to be a RFDS pilot, flight nurse, or flying doctor. RFDS SE Education Office, 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.

In keeping with the practical, problem-solving theme of the event, Sarah will also run some first-aid based scenarios that SOTA students may be faced with at home.

“It’s all part of that broader education children need to live in rural and remote areas,” said Scott Sanford, Principal of the School of the Air.

“Children may be the first responders in a medical emergency and they need to know how to use the medical chest and contact the Flying Doctor.”

“We try to make learning fun and engaging and are delighted to be partnering with the RFDS SE. Their aeromedical simulator and staff will certainly help us to reinforce the importance of being able to cope in a medical situation and the fact that the Flying Doctor will be a lifeline for these kids as it has been for all the generations that went before them.”

Founded in 1928, the RFDS was the Reverend John Flynn’s genius response to the tyranny of distance and the need for medical services in the Outback. Alfred Traeger's revolutionary pedal-powered radio enabled a communication network to be established across the vast centre of the country during the 1920’s and 30’s.

In 1946, Miss Adelaide Miethke, vice-president of the South Australian Section of the RFDS and a former inspector of girl's schools, noted how Outback children were all taught to use the RFDS radio service. In 1948 the first school lessons to Outback children were broadcast from the RFDS Base at Alice Springs using the Flying Doctor’s radio frequency. The School of the Air (SOTA) was officially established in 1956.

- ENDS -

For more information or photographs, contact;

Nick Bleszynski, Media Consultant, RFDS (South Eastern Section) on 0403 931 291 or 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.