



Media Release

30 May 2017

The Outback Car Trek reveals its driving ambition

During the past 27 years the Outback Car Trek (OBT) has become one of Australia's most successful charity motoring events. The Trek has been everywhere from Arkaroola to Yulara, visiting more than 900 towns and villages and clocking up over 100,000 kms in its quest to raise funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). Since its inception in 1990 the OBT has raised over \$25m. Last year's contribution was over \$1.5 million.

The 28th OBT will see 70 specially reinforced pre-1978 cars, as well as 20 support vehicles, embark on a seven day, 3,000 kms journey from Griffith in NSW to Port Macquarie by way of White Cliffs, Tibooburra, Hungerford, Lightning Ridge, Dirranbandi and Armidale.

"We are proud of our long association with the Flying Doctor and this year we'll overnight at White Cliffs, Tibooburra, Hungerford and Lightning Ridge, communities all serviced by the RFDS South Eastern Section clinics," said OBT organiser Bill Patrick.

"On Monday, 5 June, we are looking forward to seeing a Flying Doctor aircraft perform an emergency training drill. They will be landing at Shannon's Creek on a specially reinforced section of the Silver City Highway."

"It gives Trekkers a real connection to the cause they have supported for so long and they will hear first-hand how the money they raise supports health services in regional, rural and remote areas."

Although best known for Outback emergency retrievals, delivering vital primary healthcare clinics is also an essential part of the RFDS South Eastern Section's (RFDS SE) operations. These include; mental and dental health, breast care, women and children's health, drug/alcohol counselling and chronic disease screening, as well as GP and other specialist services, depending on population and need.

The RFDS SE is aiming to reduce the well-documented gap in health and wellbeing between those living in remote, rural and regional areas and those in cities. Money raised by the OBT will support their recently expanded dental service. This service now includes a new dental van that services communities in the West and Far West of NSW not currently on the clinic flight routes.

"Dental health is a major health issue, particularly in rural and remote areas where access to dental services is limited," said Dr Lyn Mayne, Senior Dentist at the RFDS SE.

"The work we do not only brings immediate relief to those suffering dental pain, but impacts positively on their overall health and helps educate the next generation about the importance of good dental health and healthy choices."

Bill Patrick points out that the OBT also provides a big economic boost for the communities they visit.

“I’d estimate that our 220 hungry, thirsty Trekkers usually drop some \$760,000 during our week away. That’s revenue that helps many local businesses to keep going,” said Bill.

“Trekksers also donate many thousands of dollars each year. If we hear that the community we’re in is fundraising for a good cause – we send the bucket round and help them out.”

The OBT 2017 kicks-off in Griffith on Saturday, 3 June with the traditional “Cut-a-Rama” event at the Victoria Hotel. Organised by long-time RFDS fundraisers, Just Cuts, Cut-a-Rama sees Just Cuts stylists create weird and wonderful hairstyles for unsuspecting Trekkers, in return for a donation.

Greg Sam, Chief Executive officer of the RFDS SE, underlined the importance of the Trek.

“The RFDS is a not-for-profit organisation. Though partially supported by the Commonwealth and State governments, we rely heavily on fundraising and donations from the community. These help us to deliver and expand our services, purchase and medically-equip aircraft and upgrade our facilities and infrastructure,” said Greg.

“Just Cuts and The Outback Trek have been prolific fundraisers for the RFDS for over quarter of a century.”

“We wish them all the very best for a safe and enjoyable trek to the finish line in Port Macquarie.”

Event Summary:

What: Start of the 28th Outback Car Trek

Who: Bill Patrick, event organiser

When: 8am Sunday, 4 June 2017

Where: Griffith Showgrounds, Murrumbidgee Ave, Griffith NSW 2680.

You can support the Flying Doctor by donating to the Outback car Trek on Everyday Hero at:

<https://everydayhero.com.au/event/outbackcartrek2017>

More information and the full Outback Car Trek route is available at:

<http://www.outbackcartrek.com.au/>

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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.