



Royal Flying Doctor Service
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AirDoctor



From the Chairman & CEO

WELCOME TO THE first print edition of *AirDoctor* for 2016. We have had a busy start to the year with a lot of activity since our last message.

In October we added our 15th Pilatus PC-12 to our fleet – Foxtrot X-ray Juliet (VH-FXJ) – and marked the commissioning with a dedication ceremony officiated by the Federal Treasurer, the Hon Scott Morrison MP.

We had an excellent turnout at our Adelaide Base and the aircraft was dedicated by Frontier Services Pastor Gary Ferguson who blessed the aircraft before it was commissioned by Mr Morrison (see story on page 6).

An added bonus to the ceremony was an opportunity to publicly celebrate the extraordinarily generous donation by Simon Hackett of the Hackett Foundation to fund the \$600,000 aeromedical fitout.

The induction of VH-FXJ is part of our five-year aircraft replacement program where we will commission two more PC-12s during the course of 2016 and another in 2017, replacing existing aircraft, some of which will be assigned to charter activities. As we have reported previously, we are looking forward to the further expansion of our fleet with the arrival in 2018/19 of our first aeromedical jet, the new Pilatus PC-24 which will have a greater capacity for carrying increased numbers of patients and significantly reducing long-haul flying times.

In other exciting news, early in 2016 we announced an expansion of our primary health care service delivery in outback South Australia after RFDS Central Operations took responsibility for the employment of Remote Area Nurses at health service clinics in Andamooka and Marla.

We welcome our new staff and look forward to their contribution in our expanded service delivery suite (see story on page 4).

This initiative, in addition to our existing health service in Marree, continues our strong working partnership with SA Country Health in providing essential primary health care services of the highest quality to people living, working and travelling in remote SA.

We have also moved to streamline our emergency communications in the outback with the introduction of a new emergency medical assistance number – 1800 RFDS SA (1800 733 772). This number will simplify contact with our 24/7 communications centre in Port Augusta providing immediate access to our on-call health services team.

DAVID HILLS
Chairman



JOHN LYNCH
Chief Executive Officer



In February, we announced plans to expand our presence in Darwin with a \$3 million tourist facility in the city's historic Stokes Hill Wharf precinct.

This project is in partnership with the NT Government and Tourism NT and we are proud to have been chosen to develop this significant tourism attraction in the Top End.

The development brings together two historic events that forged the resilience of the people of the Top End and will feature a high-tech retelling of the history of the RFDS and the bombing of Darwin in World War II (see story on page 11).

Back in Adelaide, construction of our new \$13 million Adelaide Base is on track and due to be completed in the middle of the year with a view to moving both our service delivery and corporate staff into the new premises by October 2016.

An important element of the work of our Board and Executive leadership in the past six months has been the introduction of our Strategic Plan which will take RFDS Central Operations forward through to 2018.

DAVID HILLS
Chairman

JOHN LYNCH
Chief Executive Officer

OUR COVER: Mount Gambier family Lynette Sage with her daughter and granddaughter Danni and Lucy Horton.

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RFDS training a lifesaver for city GP >

WITHIN TEN MINUTES of arriving at Port Lincoln Hospital for a stint as on-call doctor, Adelaide GP Michelle Cresp found herself in the Emergency Department dealing with two cyclists injured in a road accident, one with a serious chest injury.

“In the intensity of that initial five minutes, it almost seemed like a joke when they said to me, ‘you’ve got a shark attack coming in’,” Dr Cresp recalls of Anzac Day morning last year.

“We were already preoccupied with a major trauma and a little behind the eight ball; we didn’t have very long to get things ready and to call other staff in.”

Staff quickly moved to clear the ED while Dr Cresp assembled a team including three extra nursing staff from the wards, and the on-call surgeon and anaesthetist.

By the time an SA Ambulance (SAAS) crew arrived with 26-year-old Chris Blowes he was in cardiac arrest and missing his left leg above the knee, bitten off in an attack by a White Pointer during a surfing session with a couple of mates at Fishery Bay, 30 kilometres south of Port Lincoln.

Dr Cresp, three SAAS paramedics and the ED team spent the next 90 minutes working to keep Chris alive and in the process used just about every available suitable blood supply in the hospital.



“We were astonished that at about the hour mark that not only did we get a strong output (heartbeat) but he put his hand up to the tube in his mouth,” Dr Cresp says.

Dr Cresp says she owes the confidence she had mustered that day to lead the team in resuscitating Chris Blowes to her regular participation in the RFDS Rural Emergency Skills Program (RESP) training courses, now in their 10th year of delivery.

She had completed her most recent RESP course only months earlier, allowing her to maintain the skills needed in handling major trauma incidents.



> Dr Michelle Cresp (pictured in blue gown) and SA Ambulance paramedics attending to shark attack victim Chris Blowes at Port Lincoln Hospital. Photo courtesy of Today Tonight, Seven Network.

 I don't think I would go out there if there wasn't something like RESP available. 

Originally a country GP, Dr Cresp has practised in suburban Adelaide for eight years but does one week a month as a locum in country centres around SA, and at times in Broken Hill, when she can.

Like many GPs, once your initial training is over you are unlikely to be in situations where you are treating patients who have been in major accidents.

“It was an extraordinary circumstance and there were probably elements of divine grace bestowed on me but even extraordinary

situations can be improved by a basic set of skills and priorities,” Dr Cresp says.

She finds the RESP course focus on simulation and supportive team dynamics most useful.

“There’s always something to learn, new equipment and better resus outcomes, there’s always new learning and RESP is always respectful of the fact that GPs are not normally doing this kind of medicine,” she says.

“I don’t think I would go out there if there wasn’t something like RESP available.”

“There’s a chance that for all of us, Chris’s resuscitation would not have flowed as beautifully as it did without us all refreshing with programs like RESP”

The RFDS runs the RESP for GPs to ensure they are equipped with and can maintain the skills required to manage acutely unwell or critically injured patients presenting to country hospitals in SA.

Outback primary health expands >

PEOPLE LIVING, WORKING and travelling in outback South Australia will have greater access to essential primary health care services and to more streamlined emergency and medical communications with the RFDS.

RFDS Central Operations took over provision of primary health care services in Andamooka and Marla at the beginning of the year, in addition to its existing Marree Health Service, in partnership with SA Health.

The changes coincide with the introduction of a new emergency contact number for the SA outback: 1800 RFDS SA (1800 733 772).

The new number puts callers in remote locations with no nearby local health service or hospital in direct contact with the RFDS Port Augusta Base and on-call medical advice 24 hours a day.

The new number will operate in conjunction with existing HF radio frequencies of 4010 kHz, 6890 kHz and 8165 kHz.

It complements the expansion of RFDS primary health care services throughout outback SA in addition to the regular RFDS fly-in GP and Nurse clinics and RFDS Primary Care Outreach Program which transports allied health professionals to rural and remote communities.

“We acknowledge the trust the SA Government places in the ability of the RFDS to deliver essential primary health care services to the highest standards to these rural and remote communities,” says John Lynch, CEO of RFDS Central Operations.

“We have been a long-term provider of primary health care services through our Marree



Health Service to the Marree and Birdsville Track communities, and are delighted to expand our services to Andamooka and Marla.”

The RFDS has been the lead provider of emergency aeromedical and essential primary health care services in rural and remote SA since 1939. Last year, the RFDS assisted

> RFDS Community Health Nurse Cheryl Boles examines a patient at RFDS Marree Health Service.

more than 22,000 patients – equivalent to someone every 23 minutes.

Mr Lynch said the communities of Andamooka and Marla would benefit from integration with the RFDS Port Augusta Base which includes 24-hour access to telehealth services, GP fly-in clinics and emergency aeromedical services.

Across Andamooka, Marla and Marree, the RFDS provides:

- a Registered Nurse primary health care service;
- after hours emergency nursing service;
- community-based primary health education and chronic disease management;
- emergency and non-emergency ambulance services; and
- support to SA Ambulance and local volunteer ambulance crews.

“We are looking forward to building on these essential services and providing them to the highest RFDS standard to the Marla and Andamooka communities for many years to come.”

Preventable accidents add \$1 billion to health system >

THERE IS ONE day 15 years ago that stands out in Adrian Pearce's mind as if it happened yesterday.

The South East beef producer thought he was sure to die when he suffered a horrific leg injury after a self-propelled heavy-duty slasher went out of control while he was cutting the long grass on his farm near Penola.

Adrian needed to be airlifted to Adelaide by the RFDS for lifesaving surgery.

It is accidents like this one, particularly in rural and remote Australia, that the RFDS says could be prevented if a new strategy to improve safety was adopted, resulting in savings of up to \$1 billion in hospital costs.

RFDS research released in March 2016 found that rates of injury and death as a result of preventable accidents are significantly higher in country Australia than in major cities.

Martin Laverty, Chief Executive Officer of RFDS Federation Office, said the research – *Responding to injuries in remote and rural Australia* – found the hospitalisation costs of avoidable accidents exceeds \$1 billion each year and could be reduced with smart preventative measures.

“Accidents can be prevented; prevention saves lives; prevention also saves taxpayer dollars,” Mr Laverty says.

Governments need to adopt a new accident and injury prevention strategy to save both lives and avoidable hospital costs.

“One in five aeromedical evacuations the RFDS undertakes every year are in response to accidents and injury.”

Across every measure, rates of injury and associated death are higher in country Australia than in major cities.

Road Fatalities: Although more than two thirds of Australia's population live in major



> South East beef producer Adrian Pearce. Image: The Border Watch

I consider myself extremely lucky. The results of one simple little action can have untold consequences.

cities, more than half of road fatalities occur on rural and remote roads.

Workplace Injury: Injury fatality rates for agricultural workers are nine times higher than any other industry.

Poisoning: Death rates from poisoning are 3.5 times higher in remote areas compared to major cities.

Assault deaths: Australians in remote areas are 3.8 times more likely to die from an injury caused by assault than in major cities.

Children: Children from very remote areas are 2.2 times more likely to be hospitalised

for an injury than children in cities. One in three child hospitalisations are for avoidable injury, and injury claims more children's lives each year than cancer and nervous system illnesses combined.

Indigenous: Indigenous people in remote and very remote areas are twice as likely as non-indigenous people in major cities to be hospitalised for an injury.

Adrian Pearce nearly lost his life due to the simple action of leaving a machine idle with the engine on for just a moment.

The emergency surgery and rehabilitation Adrian underwent meant he avoided amputation and regained full use of his leg.

“I consider myself extremely lucky. The results of one simple little action can have untold consequences,” Adrian said.

“You'll never know when you'll need services like the RFDS and the help of the many special people in our health system.”

RFDS remains most reputable charity >

THE RFDS HAS been recognised as Australia's most reputable charity for the fifth year in a row according to the Charity Reputation Index run by research consultants AMR.

The Index surveys the public asking them to rank charities for Services, Innovation, Workplace, Citizenship, Governance, Leadership and Cost Management.

AMR Managing Director, Oliver Freedman, said the consistent level of trust, admiration and respect held by the public for the RFDS highlighted the emotional connection felt by Australians.

"Their reputation continues to be built on a broad foundation with the RFDS ranking first on six of the seven underlying reputation dimensions," Mr Freedman says.

Other charities in the top five were Guide Dogs, Fred Hollows Foundation, Beyond Blue and Médecins sans Frontières Australia.



> Simon Hackett and Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison unveil VH-FXJ.

Entrepreneur's generous gift to the community >

A LOVE OF flying and a desire to give something back to the community inspired internet entrepreneur Simon Hackett into a unique partnership with the RFDS.

What resulted was the Internode founder's Hackett Foundation granting \$600,000 towards the medical fit-out of RFDS Central Operation's latest Pilatus PC-12 aircraft – Foxtrot X-ray Juliet (VH-FXJ) – which went into aeromedical service last November.

VH-FXJ is the first of four new medically-equipped PC-12s which will replace older aircraft progressively over the next two years at a cost of more than \$6 million each. The new RFDS flying intensive care unit also features state-of-the-art avionics and emergency services communications technology.

In its first five months of service, VH-FXJ had conducted 289 aeromedical flights to 45 locations throughout South Australia, including 12 interstate flights (Perth, Sydney and Melbourne) to transport patients for

life-saving treatment such as specialist heart surgery on newborn babies and organ transplant.

Simon declared it a privilege to assist the RFDS to fulfil its mission.

"In a vast nation like Australia, prompt medical assistance is literally a matter of life and death," Simon said after the dedication.

"The RFDS plays a vital role in saving the lives of people living in remote and regional Australia, so the Hackett Foundation is honoured to assist the RFDS by funding the medical fit-out of VH-FXJ."

At a ceremony officiated by Federal Treasurer the Hon Scott Morrison MP at the RFDS Adelaide Base a prayer of dedication was made by Frontier Services Pastor Gary Ferguson.

RFDS Central Operations CEO John Lynch said the latest acquisition was part of an \$82 million capital expenditure program over the next five years.

Inspiring educator a Flying Doctor stalwart >

BETTER KNOWN AS a trailblazer in South Australian public education, Adelaide Miethke had a lasting influence on the early days of the RFDS in Central Australia.

A friend of RFDS founder, the Reverend John Flynn, Ms Miethke served as an officeholder on the Australian Council of the RFDS for nearly 30 years, reaching the position of President of the then Central Section in 1946-47.

Adelaide Miethke OBE was named as one of South Australia's 100 Inspiring Women earlier this year by *The Advertiser* to mark International Women's Day on March 8.

As a key member of the Women's Centenary Council of SA in 1936 she was instrumental in the decision to donate £5000 of funds raised to mark the event towards the establishment of the RFDS Alice Springs Base which opened in 1939.

During a visit to the Alice Springs Base in 1946, Ms Miethke's report as President of the Central Section observed the shyness of outback children and noted there was a need to find a way of "bridging the lonely distance".

This resulted in her establishment of the School of the Air which began as a branch of the RFDS at Alice Springs Higher Primary School in 1950, and later in Port Augusta, using the pedal-wireless radio sets created for the Flying Doctor by Adelaide inventor, Alf Traeger, to link the children on remote homesteads.

Ms Miethke served continuously on the Council of the organisation from the early 1930s for 30 years and was Central Section Vice-President from 1939 to 1945

She established *AirDoctor* magazine in 1946 and remained an officeholder with Central Section until her death in February 1962 at the age of 81.



> **Adelaide Miethke**
as a young teacher

🗨️ **Miethke noted the shyness of outback children and a need to bridge the "lonely distance".** 🗨️

In a tribute to Ms Miethke in the 1963 edition of *AirDoctor* fellow member of the National Council of Women, Frances Margaret McGuire, described her friend as a no-nonsense character who "... had far too keen a sense of humour ever to pity herself."

To mark the State's centenary in 1936, the Women's Centenary Council of SA established the Women's Fund which encouraged every South Australian woman to donate one shilling to honour

the first century of pioneer women in SA. They raised nearly £7000 pounds.

After much debate, which floated the idea of funding a 'Flying Nurse' in Port Augusta or an aeroplane called 'The Pioneer Woman', the Council decided to hand £5000 of the Fund to the then FDS to be used to build a base at Alice Springs.

The remainder of the Women's Fund was used to build the Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden behind Government House on King William Road in Adelaide.

Ms McGuire recalled the "spirited" Council meetings where they discussed plans for the Base director's house and the need for it to be as comfortable and convenient as possible.

"One meeting was devoted almost exclusively to a furious argument about indoor sanitation!" Ms McGuire wrote.

Ms Miethke wrote of the house in her 1946 President's report on her visit to Alice Springs Base that while neat, tidy and clean the residence "could be a charming and attractive home," but "it lacks a woman's touch which would make it so."

She is better known for her work raising teacher wages, improving teacher training and school standards, achieving the position of Inspector of Schools at the pinnacle of a long career with the Education Department.

Ms Miethke was made an OBE in 1937 and has been honoured with a plaque on North Terrace, and plaques marking the School of the Air in Alice Springs and Port Augusta.

In the final words of Ms McGuire's tribute: "Adelaide Miethke was a remarkable leader, a wonderful friend, a fine citizen, but above all, a loving and great-hearted woman."

Three generations of RFD

FOR THE SAGE and Horton families the Flying Doctor has literally become a part of their lives over three generations.

Every day the RFDS flies into Mount Gambier to evacuate a patient to a major Adelaide hospital for life-saving or specialist treatment, but for Lynette Sage's family, every time they see the red belly of a RFDS Pilatus PC-12 it triggers very specific memories.

This is because Lynette 60, her daughter Danni Horton, 32, and her granddaughter Lucy, 5, have all had their own life-saving encounters with the Flying Doctor.

We are so lucky to have the Royal Flying Doctor Service – I can't speak highly enough of their service.

Lynette was so grateful after being flown by the RFDS to Adelaide earlier this year she was prompted to write to her local newspaper to praise her experience with the Mt Gambier Hospital, Flinders Medical Centre, SA Ambulance Service and the RFDS.

"During the early hours on Sunday, January 3, I experienced very severe chest pain, along with pain radiating down my left arm, as well as extreme pain along my left jaw," Lynette recalls.

She had read enough about the symptoms for a heart attack to know that she was in need of urgent medical help.

Lynette's husband Richard called the ambulance to their Eight Mile Creek home, 28 kilometres south of Mt Gambier on the coast near Port MacDonnell, and from there, Lynette was taken to Mt Gambier Hospital.

Following diagnosis, hospital staff called the RFDS and Lynette was flown to Adelaide early on the Sunday morning and taken to Flinders



> Danni and Lucy Horton and Lynette Sage.

Medical Centre. Her husband was able to accompany her on the flight.

"I was flown to hospital in Adelaide and had three stents inserted all within 12 hours. It's just wonderful to have such a great health system when you need it," Lynette says.

"We are also so lucky to have the Royal Flying Doctor Service – I can't speak highly enough of their service."

Lynette's heart specialist later told her that

she had suffered a major heart attack but that there had been no damage to her heart muscle because of the quick timeframe in which she was able to get medical assistance.

"What I would like to say is that this service and the health system should never be taken for granted," Lynette says.

It wasn't the first time Lynette had flown with the RFDS. In 2003, her then 21-year-old daughter Danielle suffered kidney failure and

S care >

had to be flown to Adelaide in the middle of the night.

Danni says she had been feeling unwell for weeks and the day before her emergency flight she had fainted and was taken to Mt Gambier Hospital by her father suffering from high blood pressure, gastro and an inability to urinate.

The next day, a consultation with a visiting kidney specialist resulted in the RFDS being called to take Danni to Adelaide immediately to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for urgent treatment.

It was in the middle of the night and Danni recalls little, thinking it was a quick flight – 10 minutes in all.

“I found out later it was a one-hour flight and that it was me going in and out of consciousness, waking up every 10 to 15 minutes when I had my blood pressure checked – which was at stroke level,” Danni recalls.

Danni was diagnosed with Scleroderma which is an autoimmune condition that affects the connective tissue of the body. She required dialysis over the next five months before her independent kidney function was restored enabling her to go home.

“If it wasn't for the amazing RFDS flying me to Adelaide, I would not be here today,” Danni says.

“You never realise how isolated you are until emergency strikes – it would have taken five hours by road to get the specialist help I needed but I could get it in one hour with the RFDS.”

It was seven years later when Danni was to fly two more times with the RFDS when she gave birth at 25 weeks to her daughter Lucy.

Lynette and her husband Richard are avid supporters of the RFDS in Mt Gambier and every year attend the Flying Doctor fundraisers such as the ‘Dinner at the Drome’ and its annual Golf Day.

Lucy's early arrival >

THE MAIN THING five-year-old Lucy Horton remembers about her time with the Flying Doctor is the little knitted aeroplane the Flight Nurse gave to Lucy's mother Danni when they flew them home to Mt Gambier.

Lucy spent the first three months of her life 450 kilometres away from home at Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH) after being born at 25 weeks.

It was late 2010 and Danni and her husband Brett were expecting their first child.

However, due to her kidney condition, Danni's doctor had told her to expect the baby early and to travel to Adelaide at 28 weeks and, ideally, have the baby at 32 weeks.

That was not to be.

Danni's blood pressure kept rising and at 21 weeks her doctor advised her she urgently needed to go to Adelaide for specialist care to ensure her baby was born safely.

🗨️ We were the lucky ones, being able to take our baby home. 🗨️



> Danni's first cuddle of Lucy at 10 days of age.



> Premature Lucy Horton in WCH Adelaide.

Danni and Brett were flown by the RFDS to Adelaide where she was admitted to the WCH and four weeks later Lucy Olive Nellie Horton was born at 25 weeks and six days.

Lucy weighed 610 grams and was thankfully breathing on her own but faced a battle to thrive and remain off a ventilator over the next few weeks.

They remained in hospital for three months as Lucy eventually was able to take more and more milk, gaining weight until she reached 2.3 kilograms and was ready to go home.

“We were the lucky ones, being able to take our baby home; that's where I got to have my third flight with the RFDS which was the most exciting trip of all as we were finally able to bring our baby home,” Danni says.

“They were wonderful; Lucy was placed in a humidicrib and transported to the airport, then she was placed into a capsule on a stretcher and she was given a gorgeous knitted plane from the staff – which still has pride of place at home.”

Lucy, who started school this year, says the Flying Doctor is very special to her because they helped her, her mum and nanna when they needed help.

“They even gave me a plane of my own,” Lucy says.

 Crafted in Switzerland

PC-12 NG



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Tourism presence expands to Top End >

THE RFDS WILL expand its presence in the Top End with the \$3 million investment in a new high-tech tourism facility in Darwin featuring the stories of the RFDS and the World War II bombing of Darwin.

The new tourist experience, to be located at historic Stokes Hill Wharf, will feature the latest in virtual reality storytelling, using holographic technology to tell the story of the 1942 bombing.

RFDS Central Operations General Manager Northern Territory, Michael Toomey, said the museum and tourist facility will bring together two iconic elements of the Territory: the history of the RFDS which began operations in the NT in 1939, and the bombing of Darwin in 1942 by the Japanese.

“Both of these historic events helped forge the resolve and resilience of the people who live in Australia’s Northern Territory,” Mr Toomey says.

“The RFDS is both proud and delighted to be granted the opportunity to excite, inspire and educate the people of the NT and visitors about these important, landmark events.”

The Bombing of Darwin Experience will complement other military tourism experiences already available in Darwin. The display will include a full-size replica of a Japanese Mitsubishi Zero war plane used during WWII.

It will also feature:

- A replica bomb cut away to show the inner workings;
- A video floor under the Zero aircraft showing an aerial view of Darwin Harbour;



> RFDS General Manager NT Michael Toomey with NT Tourism Chairman Michael Bridge at Stokes Hill Wharf.

These historic events helped forge the resolve and resilience of the people who live in the Northern Territory.

- A glass wall facing the ocean with projections showing the harbour as it was in 1942;
- Mini holograms showing wartime Australian Prime Minister John Curtin, an indigenous person, RFDS founder the Reverend John Flynn and an RFDS nurse;
- A decommissioned RFDS Pilatus PC-12 aircraft with a medically-equipped interior; and,
- Touchscreen portals giving an insight into the operations of the RFDS.

“It’s a privilege for RFDS Central Operations to build on our partnership with the Northern Territory Government in the development of this new and innovative tourism and educational facility,” Mr Toomey says.

RFDS Central Operations runs the award-winning RFDS Alice Springs Tourist Facility which is a key attraction for tourists to the Red Centre and features a hologram of John Flynn who tells the story of the RFDS.

“We see this as an important investment by the RFDS in Darwin and one which will generate tourism activity and contribute new jobs to the local economy,” Mr Toomey says.

“The new RFDS facility in Darwin continues our commitment to the Northern Territory and comes on top of \$15 million of resource and infrastructure upgrades to our Alice Springs operations.”

The day I decided to become a midwife >

In this story from a new book about Australian midwives, RFDS Central Operations Flight Nurse, Chloe Coker, tells about the moment she decided to become a midwife.

AFTER COMPLETING HER nursing training through Newcastle University and some tertiary hospitals in Sydney, Chloe Coker, at 23, thought she would give nursing in a remote area a try.

“I thought I was going out for a one-off experience. I was sent on contract to Port Keats, known as Wadeye, 420 kilometres south-west of Darwin. With a population of 2500 it’s one of Australia’s largest Aboriginal communities. I was very nervous and a bit naïve when I arrived,” Chloe says.

“But I was lucky to work with a bunch of old-school remote area nurses out there. They took me under their wing and taught me an enormous amount. I worked on call and worked in the clinic from Monday to Friday.”

It was on Chloe’s return to Wadeye on another short contract that she birthed her first baby.

“It was on the second night after I’d arrived. I hadn’t even met the clinic’s midwife yet. The health worker called me in the early hours to say a woman was having baby pains. I didn’t know what the process was or who to call. I didn’t expect she would be at full term or about to birth. My experience in Central Australia had been that if women experienced baby pains they were signs of a premature labour or a miscarriage – all full-term women



> RFDS Flight Nurse Chloe Coker.

I was very slow to realise I was actually about to assist a woman give birth to a term baby.

were flown out for sit-down. I was very slow to realise I was actually about to assist a woman give birth to a term baby. The woman had been sent out of Wadeye for sit-down but had chosen to return because of family matters.”

Chloe found a woman clearly at full term waiting for her. Her mother was by her side for support. Chloe tried not to look concerned and diligently rang one of two midwives.

“The first I called lived across the road. She told me I wasn’t meant to call her, but to ring the other midwife who oversaw all the midwifery management. The other one lived on the other side of town and she told me she’d brush her teeth, get dressed and come along shortly. She didn’t sound happy about coming in so I thought I should do as much as I could. I sent the health worker off to find the women’s business manual while I pulled out

the IV trolley with the intention of putting a cannula in.”

A cannula is a tube that is inserted into the body for the delivery or removal of fluid and intravenous drugs and removal of blood for testing if needed.

“I had a little moment where I thought, *hmmm, something’s not quite right*. I looked at the woman and she was calmly watching me and smiling. I thought I’d take a little look and lifted up the sheet. To my surprise a little head was presenting.” Chloe dropped what she was doing and with no time to find gloves she held out her hands just in time to catch a baby boy.

“This young mother was actually smiling at me as she was birthing her baby,” she says. “I was thrilled and that sense of bewilderment and elation stayed with me for a very long time. The baby pretty much delivered itself within ten minutes of my arrival. And thinking back now, I wasn’t a terribly big help. But the experience was defining; that’s when I decided to become a midwife.”

This extract is from **Australian Midwives** by Paula Heelan and is available from Harlequin Books at: www.harlequinbooks.com.au

RFDS takes off in new series of kids' books >

SAM, DAWSON AND Emma are taking a road trip with their dad along the dusty Oodnadatta Track in outback South Australia when they stop at the ghost town of Farina.

A game of tip running around the ruins ends suddenly when their dad falls and seriously injures his leg. It's left to the kids to work out what to do next.

Naturally, in a story called *Remote Rescue*, they call for the Flying Doctor but before the RFDS aeromedical rescue crew can arrive Dawson has to administer First Aid to his stricken dad.

The RFDS is proud to be associated with the series of RFDS Adventure novels aimed at children aged eight years and over and written by well-known children's author George Ivanoff.

The first two novels in the series – *Remote Rescue* and *Emergency Echo* – were launched in March near Farina, at Leigh Creek Area School by SA Education and Child Development Minister, the Hon. Susan Close MP.

Children at the school were treated to a reading by the Minister, a book signing by George and a talk about the Flying Doctor by RFDS Central Operations General Manager Marketing & PR, Charlie Paterson.

Dr Close, who read the first novel, was full of praise for the subject matter.

"It's refreshing to read a book that brings the Flinders Ranges to Marree area to life. It's an exciting book for kids that tells an important story about how the RFDS keeps people safe across the outback," Dr Close says.

George said that the main thing he would take away from his experience of writing the books is the importance of the service provided by the Flying Doctor.

"The RFDS deserves recognition and support and I hope that these adventure stories will help spread the word and introduce the Flying Doctor to kids across Australia," George says.



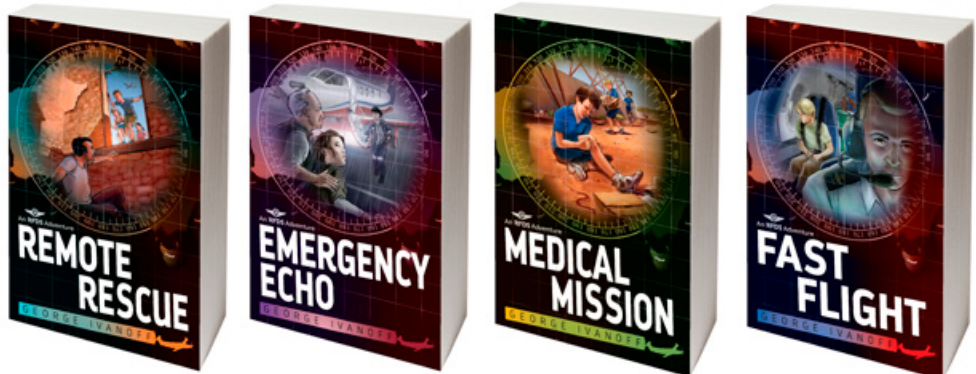
> Leigh Creek Area School students Latrell Taylor, Starla Baines, Thomas Hoddle and Caitlin Smith with author George Ivanoff.

Two more books were launched in May – *Medical Mission* and *Fast Flight* – with plans for more in the pipeline and all of them centred around children in remote locations interacting with the RFDS.

Emergency Echo tells the story of 12-year-old Alice who lives in Western Australian outback

mining town Mount Magnet and is struck down by acute appendicitis leaving her in urgent need of assistance from the RFDS.

RFDS Adventure books can be purchased for \$15 each online at www.flyingdoctor.org.au/sant/shop/ or by telephoning 08 8238 3333.



Mt Gambier volunteers mark 20th anniversary >

THERE WAS SOMETHING special about this year's annual Dinner at the Drome fundraiser and Family Fun Day held by the RFDS Mount Gambier Support Group in the first weekend of April.

It marked the 20th anniversary of the Support Group which has raised more than \$713,000 for the Flying Doctor through fundraising among the Mt Gambier community over the past 19 years.

Support Group President Chris Driscoll said the fundraising figure for the current year won't be revealed until May but it's sure to be given a boost by the anniversary celebrations which included a Family Fun Day on Sunday, 3 April at The Rail.

"Though the figures from the evening are not yet available, the silent auction alone raised \$4,700, with prizes from generous local supporters including a trip on The Ghan from Great Southern Rail," Ms Driscoll said.

At the Family Fun Day Ms Driscoll was joined in the 20th anniversary cake cutting by inaugural RFDS Mt Gambier Support Group President, John Welsh, State Member for Mt Gambier, Troy Bell, and Federal Member for Barker, Tony Pasin.

"The day was a huge success and was well supported by the public with the RFDS simulator proving a huge hit with children and adults alike," Ms Driscoll says.

"It was a fantastic public relations exercise in promoting the importance of the RFDS, so generously aided by publicity from the *Border Watch*, along with a successful event raising money which all goes directly to replacing RFDS aircraft."

The RFDS flies twice a day to the South East of SA and landed at Mt Gambier 491 times in the 12 months until the end of March 2016.



> RFDS Mt Gambier Support Group President Chris Driscoll and inaugural Support Group President John Welsh.

Simulator a hit at Caravan & Camping Show >



> RFDS simulator in place at Adelaide Showgrounds.

THE RFDS SIMULATOR was a hit with crowds attending the four-day Caravan and Camping Show at Wayville Showgrounds in Adelaide in February. The full-scale replica PC-12 makes regular appearances around SA – and sometimes interstate – at regional and rural field days, schools and special shows like this one.

The RFDS Adelaide Auxiliary and RFDS staff hosted the simulator and explained the Flying Doctor's services to children and adults alike who queued to have a look inside. The Auxiliary also ran a stall selling RFDS merchandise as a fundraiser and all in all had a very successful day raising a total of \$5765.15.



> RFDS Adelaide Auxiliary Vice-President Helen Duffy and Treasurer Peter Johnston at work.

Simpson Desert – where bikes rule 4WDs >

THE DEDICATED SIMPSON Desert Bike Challenge riders managed to keep their noses in front in more ways than one during the latest race raising a record \$56,827 for the RFDS.

The hardy band of 20 cyclists actually outpaced their four wheel drive support vehicles in the soft sand dunes as they traversed 500 kilometres of the Simpson Desert last September-October over five days from Purni Bore in South Australia to Birdsville in Queensland.

Race Director, Alan Keenleside, said they tackled the east-west French Line across the desert for the first time since the inaugural Simpson Desert Bike Challenge in 1987 when not a single rider completed the course.

“It was just too hard and they gave up after 10 kilometres,” Alan says of the 1987 race. “After that, every year they raced the less direct line which crosses far fewer sand dunes.”

The introduction of fat tyres – known as “fat bikes” – for the bikes in 2015 meant they were ready to tackle the more than 1200 sand dunes along the French Line which Alan says are “massive”.

“The biggest surprise this year was that the bikes were faster than the cars.”

“The biggest surprise this year was that the bikes were faster than the cars, consistently, and on every difficult stage; the front convoy was in constant danger of being caught,” Alan says.

“The French Line is very, very sandy and very slow going for the four wheel drives but the bikes are narrow enough to just slip up the dunes, including Big Red, the highest dune in the desert.”

While still punishing – only half of the 20 riders managed to complete the entire course – they loved it so they plan to tackle the French Line again this year.

The 2015 race raised a record \$56,827 for the Flying Doctor, topping the previous year’s total of \$52,000.

This year’s race marks the 30th year and will take place from 27 September to 1 October. You can find out more at www.desertchallenge.org



> Simpson Desert Bike Challenge riders tackle Big Red. Photos by Grant Sebastian

PESA Golf Day – 37 years’ support for RFDS >

THE ANNUAL PETROLEUM Exploration Society of South Australia (PESA) Golf Day has been a fundraising mainstay for the RFDS celebrating its 37th anniversary this year.

“Not only is it a fun day out for oil patch sponsors and members, the event is a mark of the strong and enduring support the SA exploration industry has for the Flying Doctor,” joint event coordinator, Claudia Fintina says.

Ms Fintina, who organises the event with Andy Pietsch on behalf of the Society of Petroleum Engineers of SA, said the PESA

Golf Day has raised a total of \$342,000 for the RFDS over the past 19 years alone.

One hundred golfers teamed up and teed off in an Ambrose competition at the Flagstaff Hill Golf and Country Club in Adelaide on Friday, 18 March 2016 and raised a magnificent \$10,000 for the Flying Doctor.

> PESA Golf Day organising committee members Claudia Fintina, Mike Willis, Nick Dunstan, Jo Anne Hart, Andy Pietsch and Doug Roberts.



A Will to Save Lives >



Established in 1928, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) conducts **100 flights across Australia every day.**

But we can't do this by ourselves. We rely on bequests and donations from the community to keep our crews and 'flying intensive care units' in our skies, every day (and night) of the year.

Leave a life-saving legacy. Please remember the RFDS in your will.

To receive your complimentary copy of our special bequest booklet, call Ross Curtis on (08) 8238 3333 or email ross.curtis@flyingdoctor.net

