



# TakeOff

IN THE AIR, ON THE GROUND

ISSUE 02 DECEMBER 2016



Royal Flying Doctor Service  
TASMANIA



## Inside this issue

- > Flinders Island Show
- > Immunisation addressed at The Huon Show
- > The Governor-General visits Launceston Base
- > 2016 CTA Scholarship Winners
- > From the Archives
- > Fish Feast at Quercus Park

Melanie Withers, Brianna Leaman and  
Olivia Coyne (October issue)

*All the Staff at the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Tasmania, thank you for  
your support this year and wish you a safe and happy festive season*

## Right as Rain

Despite the fresh air and beautiful landscapes, living in rural Tasmania can be bad for your health. The statistics tell us Tasmania has the highest rate of premature deaths in Australia, which primarily occur in rural areas where avoidable hospitalisations are more common.

At the RFDS we're starting to address these health inequities through our innovative Right as Rain program. With our partners Healthy Tasmania, we approach communities and ask them their challenges.

We then set out to work with local services to develop a plan that will make positive changes. The focus being, on health promotion, prevention and early detection.

This year we've been engaging with communities at the local agricultural shows in George Town, King Island, Flinders Island and Huonville. The partnerships we've made mean we are continuing to work with existing services to improve health and wellbeing.

The program relies on the generous financial support from within the Tasmanian community.



## Flinders Island Show

This year's Show on the 14th October, saw a great turn out from the Royal Flying Doctors Service (Tasmania) in partnership with Healthy Tasmania. Their mutual program, 'Right as Rain' focuses on differing health issues in various regions. The focus on Flinders Island: Men's Health.

With a clear imbalance in health outcomes between metropolitan, rural and remote regions of Australia, it was a delight to welcome the crew from Launceston. Here on the Island, we are seeing the importance of men getting together through various activities, be it sport orientated or social activities such as barbecues. Not only is their physical wellbeing improving, but these types of undertakings see a contribution to positive mental health.

With thanks to Jo Youl, from A Taste of Flinders

## Immunisation addressed at The Huon Show

The national immunisation register shows that Huonville and Bruny Island have some of the lowest rates of infant immunisation in the county. With this in mind, the Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania, Right as Rain (RasR) program teamed up with Immunisation Paediatrician, Dr Jenny Royle from Melbourne to provide information for families visiting the Huonville Show on November 15th.

Along with other medical professionals present, parents and parents to be, were offered the opportunity to ask questions and get free advice on the latest vaccination research. Complex issues relating to immunisation, including previous vaccine reactions and heightened concerns around potential immunisation side effects, were all addressed.

Dr Bastian Seidel, President of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners said

"The Huon Valley Health Centre is pleased to be sponsoring the RFDS for this event. GP's know only too well how often patients search the internet for health information which can be more confusing than useful. The Huon Show will be the perfect opportunity for locals to get up-to-date, face-to-face information from experts so they can make the best decision for their family."

The aeromedical simulator was also on display, and Medical and Exercise Physiology students from the University of Tasmania conducted fun activities to test strength, flexibility and fitness.

## From the Editor

It's been an exciting few months preparing the first 'Take Off' magazine for you in October, and now being able to have a second edition in time for Christmas. Every quarter we hope to take you on a journey around the State, and from afar, with stories that are not just about what we are doing on your behalf, but what you, as our Donors and supporters are also undertaking.

It's important to remember, that every dollar of your donation, and the fundraising efforts of the wonderful groups around the State, is spent here in Tasmania. I hope you will all find something of interest, in this, the December and second edition.

Mandy Burbury



## Visit by the CEO, Royal Flying Doctor Service

It was a pleasure to welcome Martin Laverty, CEO from the Federation office in Canberra, to Hobart for a two day visit on the 15th November. Martin met with various stakeholders to discuss the expansion of the RFDS dental outreach services in Tasmania. Following a commitment by the Federal Government, \$11 million over two years has been provided to the RFDS from January 2017.

"Providing \$11 million over the next two years for Flying Doctor dental outreach will allow expansion of our existing dental services across Australia. In Tasmania, it means we can start a brand new service where previously we've simply not had funds available." Said Martin, to an assembled group who met for morning tea in Hobart.

The Dental Outreach Program being established in Tasmania is designed to focus on those remote and rural communities that are currently unable to access existing services. Dental conditions are the leading cause of potentially preventable hospitalisations in Tasmania. The dental model under development will involve preventative screening and in due course offer restorative treatments.



Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)

## The Governor-General visits Launceston Base

The Board of the Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania, Staff and supporters welcomed His Excellency General, the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) and Lady Cosgrove to a short visit on Wednesday 19th October.

Having spent the day visiting the Tasmania Zoo, Scotch Oakburn College, St.Vincent de Paul, and the University of Tasmania Maritime College we were honoured to be given a visit prior to their boarding the RAAF 737 on the tarmac outside the Base.

Mr Malcolm White, President, introduced those attending, and His Excellency spoke for some time, giving fascinating insights into his time in East Timor, and his obvious great knowledge of the work done by the RFDS.



## Are you up for the adventure of a lifetime?

From June 18th to the 25th 2017, you could be walking the famous Larapinta Trail, one of Australia's premier walking tracks. From the old Alice Springs Telegraph Station to the peak of Mount Sonder, the trail stretches some 223 kilometres along the backbone of the West MacDonnell Ranges.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service and Inspired Adventures have collaborated to provide an incredible, yet challenging adventure. By day you will challenge yourself as you trek across the Red Centre and at night you will sleep under a blanket of stars.

As a Tasmanian we hope you will see this as an opportunity to put a team together and visit a landscape far removed from that seen here in your own State. Our aim will be to assist you with your fund raising, and with every step you take, you will be raising vital funds to help the Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania.

**For more information you  
can visit the website**

**[http://inspiredadventures.com.  
au/events/rfds-larapinta-2017/](http://inspiredadventures.com.au/events/rfds-larapinta-2017/)**

**or contact Amanda Crooks  
m: 0455 110 050**

**e: [Amanda.Crooks@rfdstas.org.au](mailto:Amanda.Crooks@rfdstas.org.au)**

## Pilots - the engine room of the RFDS

To be a pilot with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, involves a minimum of, 3,000 hours of time in command of an aircraft, 500 hours of night flying, and 150 hours of instrument flying time.

**Oliver Doig is our youngest and latest Pilot to join the team of seven in Launceston:**

"To cut long story short" says Oliver, "after leaving school I joined the Army, but after a time I knew I wanted to be a pilot, and looked at flying with the Military. I decided against this though, and went through flying training with a civil organisation in Sydney."

Oliver went on to complete his 150 hours of training for his commercial license and a further 50 hours to gain his instructor rating. After some instructing, and survey work in NSW, Oliver made the decision to come to Tasmania in 2011, and ended up as Chief Pilot for Airlines of Tasmania, based at Cambridge.

Nine years since leaving the army, sees 31 year old Oliver working for the RFDS here at the Launceston Base. Not having flown the Beechcraft King Air used by the RFDS has meant Oliver needed to get 100 hours of training before he could fly alone.

Sitting alongside Oliver on flights, Stan Griffiths and David Liddell have overseen his flying. With further training on the flight simulator in Melbourne, and at ground school in Dubbo, Oliver was endorsed here in Launceston, on the King Air on November 3rd 2016.

"I thought my wife and I would just be here for a year, but we love it, and now with 19 month old Harriet, Tasmania is home."

**All the Staff in Launceston pass on their good wishes to Oliver and trust he has many years of safe flying.**



The morning I met with Pilot, David Liddell, he looked extremely embarrassed, and preferred not to 'make a big deal' of his heroic effort the night before. Whilst buying his milk at the local grocery store, he was commandeered to help a gentleman who required CPR. Peter Morgan, Manager Aero Medical and Medical Retrievals, who sat in briefly on our interview said,

"I'm absolutely thrilled that Dave had a go at this. He's been there supporting paramedics through lots of situations in the community. He worked really hard to help someone who had collapsed, well done"

We know our Pilots are seen as Heroes, but the extra mile they go to is phenomenal. David, a Launceston boy and an electronics engineer, commenced his flying career during the 1990's. Enjoying the flying more and more he passed his commercial license and went on to instructing. "I've never picked up a soldering iron since" he said.

Forestry Fire spotting, parachute drops, working with small airlines, and relief ('Tuesday Dave') pilot with the RFDS Tasmania, time eventually saw David moving from one day a week, to a full time position in 2003.

"I like what they do, I like their ethos, it was an easy decision, and I've loved it ever since. You come to work each day, and you don't know where you're going to be, and you can make a difference to someone's life every day."

**Simon Froude, Base Manager, Launceston said**

"David and Oliver are great examples of the talented individuals RFDS attracts to fill these pivotal roles. All of our seven pilots in Tasmania are very experienced before they arrive at RFDS. This extensive knowledge ensures the safety of our medical crews and patients around the clock every day of the year. We're very fortunate in Tasmania to have such a talented group of pilots who work with the rest of our staff and Ambulance Tasmania as a cohesive friendly team."



Oliver Doig





Dr. Melanie Withers

## Dr. Melanie Withers - my time with the RFDS

"There are not enough words to describe the experience. It was an extraordinary privilege to be chosen as the 2016 Fred McKay Scholarship recipient."

"I have always had an interest in rural medicine and it is every medical students dream to work with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. For me it was the perfect way to finish my final year. This opportunity has cemented my desire to work in areas like Broken Hill and sparked a passion for retrieval medicine."

Mel Withers tells of hot days and flood waters, frightening farm accidents, air turbulence and of swooping magpies but nothing could dampen her enthusiasm for the characters of the 'bush' and their resilience against all odds.

"It was such a powerful and empowering learning experience! I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this experience and made it possible for me; I truly believe that I have grown as a health professional and as an individual."

## John Flynn Dental Scholarship



Brianna Leaman spent her first two weeks based in Dubbo working alongside two other Dental Assistants, two Flying Dentists, and an Oral Health Therapist. During these two weeks she spent time working in the Lightning Ridge Health Centre, the Bourke Aboriginal Health Centre, Goolooga Aboriginal Health Centre and The Collarenebri Hospital.

Whilst assisting she noticed a high percentage of rampant cavities in patients as well as an extremely high percentage of periodontal disease. The majority of patients had minimal knowledge of when and how general oral health should be performed, and the towns also lacked fluoride in their water systems.

"Working in these outback towns made me realise just how big an impact not just the RFDS TOOTH team (The Outback Oral Treatment & Health program) had on these communities but also just how important the whole of the RFDS is to these towns. I would like to thank the Royal Flying Doctor Service for giving me this opportunity, one that I will never forget."



Brianna Leaman



Lindsay Miller, OAM and Sue Gillon

## Strathmore Open Garden

Sue Gillon and her team of amazing helpers (including husband, Graham) held an open garden at their home, Strathmore, Evandale on Sunday 27th November. Words can't describe the fabulous 13.5 acres of lush lawns, deciduous trees, roses, English exotics and box hedges. The lake glistened and families revelled in the serene surroundings. Devonshire Teas, wines and raffles all helped to contribute to an amazing \$7,800.00 being raised and donated to the Royal Flying Doctor Service here in Tasmania.

Sue and her family have had cause to use the services of the RFDS in the past, as have many of her helpers, and we send them all a huge thank you for their amazing effort. In our next issue we hope to bring you a photograph of equipment purchased with their generosity.



Mr Alan Beecroft the CTA President, presenting the cheque to, John Kirwan CEO



On Tuesday 8th November, a presentation to the Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania from the Commercial Travellers Association (CTA) was held at the Launceston Clinical School. Through their generosity, a cheque for \$150,000.00 was donated to fund three scholarships per year to the value of \$4,000.00 for each 4th year medical students with the University of Tasmania (UTAS).

The donation was given in recognition of the past work and service of their members who travelled to remote and rural areas of Tasmania, and who received support from rural and remote GPs and the RFDS.

The scholarship assists the student with the costs associated with their 4th year elective placement, where they have chosen to undertake their elective in a rural or remote area of Australia.

Congratulations to this year's recipients. Beth Trainer with the RFDS Port Hedland, Nicholas Cretan RFDS Broken Hill and Rachel Stafford, RFDS at Port Augusta

We look forward in future magazines to hearing from the recipients of their time with the RFDS in rural and remote Australia.



## From the archives

with Lindsay Millar OAM,  
RFDS Tasmanian Emeritus Board Member

Prior to the establishment in 1960 of the Royal Flying Doctor, Tasmania, aeromedical evacuations were carried out using aircraft from the two Aero Clubs. One such aircraft used in the north by the Tasmanian Aero Club was the four seater, single engine, fabric covered Auster J5, as pictured.

With only basic flying instruments, and no lights, navigational equipment or radio there was many a daring rescue flight! Navigating by light houses (and you thought only shipping used this method!) and landing, using car headlights, patients were safely transferred on a rudimentary stretcher with one paramedic and carry on medical equipment.

Lindsay Millar tells of a flight in the Auster J5 to rescue a seriously injured patient with spinal and leg injuries from a tractor accident,

"Engineer Neil Beattie was seconded to travel in the Auster. Neil removed the door of the rear cabin bulkhead and window. The patient on the spinal board was lifted through and positioned with his head under the instrument panel, and his feet in the rear fuselage."

Neil Beattie replaced the removed sections and the flight commenced. The procedure was once again repeated on landing. The service may have been elementary, and far removed from today's service but it saved the lives of many people living in remote areas of the State.



## Data Drives Direction

In 2015, the RFDS Australia, established a new Research and Policy Unit, located in Canberra. Its three specific aims are to:

- Voice and respond to health outcome and clinical service needs of country Australians, informed by RFDS clinical data and other sourced evidence;
- Fulfil the Safety and Quality in Health Care standard requirement to be an organisation driven by information; and
- Make publicly available RFDS clinical data and clinical research findings to contribute to public policy and clinical practice improvements.

Dr Lara Bishop, Manager Research and Policy in Canberra said,

**“To achieve this, we gather evidence about, and recommend solutions to, overcoming barriers to poor health outcomes and limited health service access for patients and communities cared for by RFDS programs.”**

An important method of communicating the findings is through the development and dissemination of research and policy reports. These reports also include Indigenous data, in support of the commitment to Indigenous reconciliation, and to improve health outcomes and access to health services for Indigenous Australians as a contribution to the ‘Close the Gap’ campaign.

Since 2015, the Unit has produced three major research reports. These reports have focused on disparities in oral health access and outcomes, and the impact of injuries on remote and rural Australians, as well as the provision of aeromedical care to remote Indigenous Australians. In addition an external report was commissioned on the primary healthcare services it delivers in remote and rural Australia.

Dr Bishop went on to say, “We have also recently established a Clinical and Health Services Research Committee. Their role is to identify the need for, and conduct clinical and health services research projects, to benefit health service delivery and health outcomes in remote and rural areas.”



## Fish Feast at Quercus Park

For some years now the Lions Club of Westbury has been holding an event they call the “Fish Feast”. Rock Lobster fisherman, Ross Parker with fishing friends from the East Coast, provides and cooks the fish and chips for the evening, and members provide the salads and desserts.

With small beginnings in a shearing shed on one of the members’ farms, they soon outgrew both the shearing shed, and the Bracknell Town Hall. This year with the bigger venue, being the function centre at Quercus Rural Youth Park, it easily accommodated the attending 225 people on Saturday 15th October.

Secretary, Bernard Atkinson said “We decide which charity the proceeds will be donated to. We then invite them to have representatives attend and inform patrons about their organisation and the work they do.”

Amanda Crooks, Fundraising Manager, and Lindsay Millar attended on behalf of the RFDS. Joining in with the laughing and cheering at the entertainment provided by the Lions, they were overjoyed to also be presented with a generous cheque from the group for \$5,000.00.

## Thanks to *Furneaux Freight*

**An enormous thank you to the team at Furneaux Freight at Bridport, who generously donated the cost of sending the Royal Flying Doctor Simulator to Flinders Island in time for the Show on the 14th October 2016.**

**Weighing in at 1.5 tonnes and measuring 7.8 metres in length, the freighting of the Simulator is a hefty financial impost. It does however, provide a powerful insight into the work done by the RFDS.**

## And from you...

We enjoy hearing your stories and were thrilled to receive some notes from you following the publication of the October magazine.

Mrs Gweneth Johnston from Lutana, at the wonderful age of 87 told of her "admiration for the dedicated pilots, doctors and nurses who attend the sick and injured throughout Australia in all weathers."

Mr Anthony Ryan from Devonport has had reason to use the Royal Flying Doctor to not only fly his wife to Melbourne but to also fly his granddaughter to Hobart.

And a lovely story from Mrs Margaret Gardner from Rose Bay who met John Flynn during the 1940's. He stayed with her grandmother and allowed her to use his little typewriter! Apparently, according to Margaret, John Flynn's handwriting was so terrible he typed everything. "Unfortunately, though", says Margaret, "his typing wasn't very good and he corrected the mistakes by hand, making an even worse mess. Well that was the story! He remains my idol". Thank you Margaret.

**Please do continue to keep us informed of your stories. We love reading them.**



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