

# TakeOff

IN THE AIR, ON THE GROUND



Royal Flying Doctor Service  
TASMANIA



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- > **Having a ball** - Governor gets glitzy to support dental program
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# Governor sets the ball rolling for new dental vehicle

By Lana Best

No-one can remember why the dancing stopped at Government house 43 years ago.

But when Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Governor of Tasmania decided to polish up the dance floor to celebrate the Queen's Birthday and add some sparkle to the depths of winter, she also had another agenda.

A private meeting with RFDS Tasmania dental team members, while they were all in Hobart for the National Rural Health Conference in March, strengthened her desire to help improve the oral health of rural Tasmanians.

She listened with quiet intent and a sympathetic ear to the plight of the RFDS dentists, dental therapists and assistants trying to get to everyone who desperately need work on their teeth. She heard about their dream of providing the free dental service from a mobile dental vehicle that would provide better working conditions, streamlined consultations, and less lost time in finding and moving into makeshift workplaces in regional communities.

Her Excellency didn't hesitate in committing the profits from the 2019 Winter Ball to kick-start the \$350,000 goal to make the dream a reality.

"As Governor I have engaged with RFDS Tasmania on a number of projects and initiatives. Doing so has given me insight into just what can be achieved through this remarkable medical and social community service," she told guests at the ball.

"I have been particularly interested in the RFDS dental health outreach program, which seeks to overcome the barriers to oral health care services.

"Visiting our child and family centres around the state, I have been struck by the need for more easily accessible dental health care for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in particular."



*Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Governor of Tasmania with her daughter Meg Bignell at the ball.*

And so on Thursday, June 6, they came in their long gowns and smart suits to the Government House ballroom to dance the night away to the Australian Army Band.

The farmers, the military, the business leaders, the health experts, the volunteers - all walks of life willing to pay the \$200 ticket price and support the efforts of Her Excellency, who, in her glittery turban and flanked by her husband and daughters, could not have looked more pleased.

Delicious food was served, wine was auctioned and even those with two left feet were taught the two-step.

The ballroom came alive as it had done decades ago and almost \$23,000 was raised thanks to RFDS Tasmania's gracious patron.

*More photos from the Winter Ball page 4-5*

# Dental team targets Bass Strait Islands

King and Flinders Islands' residents will have their access to dental services expanded with new dental program provided by Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Tasmania starting from July on King Island and September on Flinders Island.

Oral Health Services Tasmania (OHST) will continue to manage child patients on King Island however adults on both islands and children on Flinders will soon be able to access the RFDS dental teams for free dental treatments.

The RFDS has a long history of helping Bass Strait island residents with their dentistry, especially on Flinders Island after a collaboration in the early 60s between Flinders Council (Warden Eastoe and Council Clerk Bailey), the Australian Dental Association and the Department of Health (through RFDS secretary, Laurie Shea).

As a result Dr Peter Evans, who held a private pilot's licence, flew regularly to the island from 1964 and provided dental services at the Flinders Island hospital for more than 10 years.

Since then the RFDS has supported and continues to support dental services, by contributing to the costs for private practitioner dentists and when required, equipment needs on Flinders island.

At the official launch of the new dental program on June 25, RFDS president Malcolm White said that it was gratifying to see the partnership with the State Government and OHST develop and evolve in the way it has.

"I think it makes a lot of sense for governments to partner with reputable not-for-profit organisations in the provision of services," he said.

"Our particular strength is, I believe, serving small rural and remote communities, as we are currently doing in the provision of dental, such as the service provided in partnership with the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, and primary healthcare, including mental health services in a number of Tasmanian rural communities."

Dentist Dr Lorika Strickland and Oral Health Therapist Sandra Taylor and their dental assistants are keen to commence their Bass Strait work and the pleasure of getting to know their patients and the community of both King and Flinders Island.

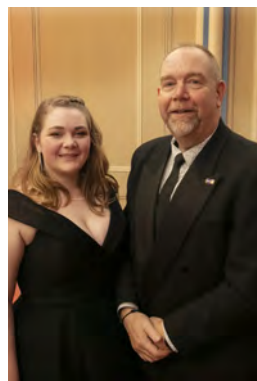
As well as dental services on the islands, OHST and the RFDS are working in partnership to improve access to dental services for Tasmanians in other rural areas, such as in the Smithton, Scottsdale and Swansea regions.



*Flinders Island Multi-Purpose Centre director of nursing John Loudon, RFDS president Malcolm White, RFDS dentist Lorika Strickland, former Health Minister Michael Ferguson, Premier Will Hodgman, oral health therapist Sandra Taylor.*

# Winter Ball 2019 Government House

Photos: Sam Adams





# Samuel transported from Bridport dunes to Melbourne hospital

By Lana Best - Photo: Mauro Trentin

A typical family summer holiday at the beach. A perfect Christmas Eve enjoying time with family and friends. An idyllic teenage adventure riding motorbikes on the sand dunes of a remote beach on the north coast of Tasmania.

**Then the bottom dropped out of the Burr family's world when they saw their son speed across the crest of a dune and fly off a sandy cliff, crashing heavily many metres below.**

Riding his CRF250 right to the bottom of the abyss, Samuel's bike landed heavily and snapped in two from the impact.

Worse still the teenager's body snapped in seven places through the pelvis and lower back.

"I didn't see the drop-off until I was already over the edge," Samuel recalls.

"My dad saw me disappear and knew it wasn't good – he was there in seconds.

"My mum had to run to the top of a dune to get reception to call 000.

"I laid there for three hours while my uncle went and met paramedics at the nearest road and ferried them in by 4WD and then took me out to where a helicopter was waiting to take me to Launceston General Hospital."

After initial scans showed horrific damage to Samuel's body, including a crushed pelvis, internal bleeding, a deep gash under his chin and a severed tongue, there was no doubt that specialist care at a Melbourne hospital was required.

Samuel was transferred to the Royal Flying Doctor Service base at Launceston Airport and RFDS pilot Captain Steve Wood still recalls, 16 months later, how vulnerable Samuel looked on the stretcher and how he thought "This could be my kid. This could be anyone's kid".

"It's fantastic to be part of a multi-disciplinary team and it's rewarding to feel as though I've assisted in some small way towards someone's recovery," Cpt Wood said.

"When you're dealing with a young person injured in a remote location it is a big logistical exercise and everyone from the communications team to the medical

teams in two states have to work together for the best outcome for the patient."

For Samuel that teamwork meant world-class medical help was only an hour-and-a-half away – despite being injured 500km away and on the other side of Bass Strait.

"I had come out of shock and was on pain relief by the time I got onto the plane," Samuel, who is now 18, recalled.

"Everyone was so nice to me, really making me feel better about the situation.

"When I think back now it's crazy that I could fly all the way from Tasmania to Victoria, with no charge, to receive specialist care - simply because people everywhere donate to the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

"And I often think about how, on Christmas Eve at 11 O'clock at night, all of these emergency services, medical people and the pilot were only thinking about getting me to hospital as quickly and comfortably as possible.

"Up until my accident I didn't even know the RFDS operated in Tasmania yet it's been here helping hundreds of people every year for nearly 60 years!



Samuel Burr of Nunamara has five flights ahead of him after crashing his motorbike at Bridport on Christmas Eve, 2017.



I really wish more people knew what a great job the RFDS does because when you're young you just don't think anything bad is ever going to happen yet there are always kids needing emergency medical help.



*Samuel Burr and his mum Melissa, who is thrilled with the recovery her son has made since his motorbike accident 16 months ago.*

In Tasmania the Royal Flying Doctor Service works under contract to Ambulance Tasmania, strengthening a vital chain of emergency response that can include both rotary and fixed wing aircraft, and various forms of road transport.

Samuel was transported to the Royal Alfred Hospital and the decision was made to give his body a chance to heal without an operation, although he did have a pin put into his leg so that it could be put in traction and a 10kg sandbag attached to help straighten out his pelvis.

The RFDS flew Samuel back to Launceston a few days later and then when some complications arose flew him back to Melbourne again for further treatment.

He had his fourth and hopefully final flight on the plane about eight weeks later when he flew back to Launceston for a week of rehabilitation and then finally back home to Nunamara.

Now, more than a year later, Samuel is back at work on a farm and fully recovered from his injuries.

His sister has required regular surgery in Melbourne since she was little. His mum has been in and out of hospitals for years battling a brain tumor which was recently removed.

So the eight weeks that Samuel spent at the Alfred is hopefully the last the Burr family will see of interstate medical facilities for a while.

However they all know that when specialist clinical care is necessary, the Royal Flying Doctor Service will not just help them get to hospitals in Launceston and Hobart, but if necessary to experts in Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide.

Samuel's mum Melissa said that at a time of uncertainty and confusion there was just one thing she felt she could rely on – and that was the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

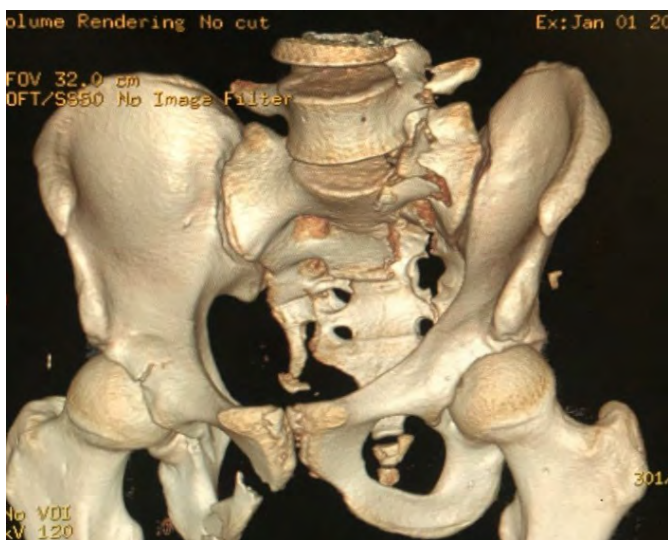
“My husband and I had to worry about getting to Melbourne on the next available flight which wasn't until the next morning, but we knew Samuel was already on the way and in safe hands – we were just basically chasing the plane,” she said.

“The plane had just dropped off a mum and her newborn at the Royal Children's Hospital and then it was crossing Bass Strait again with Samuel just a few hours later.

“On both occasions that Samuel was flown to Essendon the decision was made by the doctors and then he was on his way in no time accompanied by Ambulance Tasmania paramedics.

“We will forever be grateful for everyone involved – from the donors who support the RFDS to the paramedics and hospital staff on both ends who gave Samuel the help he needed.

“Like most people we didn't ever imagine someone in our family being in a medical emergency and it really opened our eyes to how important aeromedical transfers are and how many specially trained people and specialist equipment is involved.”



*The X-ray showing seven breaks through Samuel's pelvis and lower back.*

And on that note...



**The Royal Flying Doctor Service is honoured to see its legacy continue on the next generation \$20 banknote design which will be released into circulation in October by the Reserve Bank of Australia.**

A newly drawn portrait of RFDS Founder Reverend John Flynn features on the note alongside iconic images from the early days of the world's first aerial medical service.

RFDS Australia CEO Dr Martin Laverty said that having the RFDS and its founder John Flynn recognised on the \$20 note reflects the Aussie spirit of "can do".

"The RFDS can reach every part of country Australia, only because so many are willing to reach into their pocket and donate \$20 or more to ensure the RFDS can keep flying."

The newly designed banknote also features an RFDS De Havilland Dragon aircraft leaving a remote Broken Hill homestead in 1948 and the ingenious Traegar pedal wireless radio used by the service to improve communication in remote areas.

However a camel no longer features in the design.

The aircraft was drawn from a photograph taken at the Veldt Station, 170 kilometres north of Broken Hill, where the Barlow family lived from 1922 to 1957.

Judith Jackson, 77, is featured in the photograph as a little girl alongside her mother, Helen Barlow, as the aircraft departs.

The other side of the \$20 banknote features Mary Reibey, the pioneer businesswoman with interests in shipping and property.

The banknote features include a top-to-bottom clear window that contains dynamic elements, including a flying kookaburra that moves its wings and changes colour, and a reversing number '20'.

There is also a patch with a rolling-colour effect and microprint featuring excerpts from Flynn's book.

# Cuddle cat for India

Little India Cooper from East Devonport was one of the happiest patients to be transported by The Royal Flying Doctor Service and Ambulance Tasmania to Royal Hobart Hospital recently - mainly because of the "cuddle cat" she had for company.

India had been jumping on her bed when she fell off and hurt her neck five days prior.

Under medical advice, when it didn't improve in 48 hours, her family took her to the Launceston General Hospital for an X-ray, which revealed damage to the vertebrae in her neck.

In remarkably good spirits and excited to be flying on a plane, India said she couldn't wait to tell her three brothers about the unexpected trip to Hobart where she would be put in traction to make sure she healed properly.

And she named her cat, made by a generous and talented local, Rosie.

For dad Luke it was a worrying situation but he said he couldn't fault the care and attention his daughter received and how remarkably unperturbed she was despite her sore neck.

"I admit I had no idea that the Royal Flying Doctor Service worked under contract to Ambulance Tasmania to provide this amazing service in Tasmania," he said.

“And the way everyone goes that one step further, with things like toys for the children, is fantastic.”

**Donations of quality, hand-made toys for children gratefully accepted**







*Shirley and Brian Smith of Trial Harbour encourage visitors to their history rooms to visit the garden and drop a coin in the lucky Buddah.*

# Garden feature fills up for the Flying Doctor

**In the heart of Trial Harbour Shirley and Brian Smith are well known by locals and visitors for their amazing efforts volunteering at their self-made history rooms.**

For more than 20 years they've been opening up to the public a section of their own home which has been packed with historic pieces, artefacts, minerals and treasures collected around the region.

When tourists ask the question "What is this little town all about?" locals point them to the history rooms where they get a personal tour and a unique indoor and outdoor experience.

And a little bit more than they bargained for, including a heartfelt story.

Seven years ago Shirley and Brian's son Michael had a brain aneurysm that burst and he was flown to Hobart for surgery. Never fully recovering he eventually passed away about 13 months later, aged 40.

Less than a year after Michael's medical emergency their other son Christopher had a heart attack and was transported to Launceston where the expert treatment he received saved his life.

These life traumas have made the Smiths not only aware but extremely grateful for the medical transport services they have relied upon.

That is why every visitor to the history rooms are encouraged to donate to the RFDS - and the pair have gone to great lengths to make that a fun experience too.

Brian has built a gabian rock wall topped with a big Buddah money box and then carefully placed a lovely sign on a slice of timber that says: "You are now in the wild west wilderness, please donate to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. They rely on us. We rely on them in our hour of need. Thank you for visiting. Grateful thanks for donating."

He's even extended his pyrography to add an image of a plane.

**"Being a bit quirky we used to have a toilet there in the garden as a money collection point - but we found that for some reason people were hesitant to lift the lid and drop anything in," Shirley laughed.**

"It's amazing how many visitors, from all around the country, say they are familiar with the RFDS and its work and how happy they are to donate."

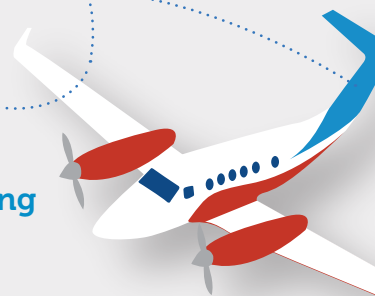
The Smiths send regular cheques to RFDS Tasmania from their fundraising and they plan on doing so for as long as they can. Over the past 10 years they've raised more than \$4,000.

"It's our little way of giving back and we welcome everyone to call in and visit our history rooms and pop a gold coin in the lucky Buddah."

If you have a fundraising idea please visit our website [www.flyingdoctor.org.au/support-us/fundraise/](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au/support-us/fundraise/) and download the guidelines or call us on (03) 6391 0509.

# Touch and Go

An aviation manoeuvre requiring a pilot landing on the runway and taking off again without a full stop. Here we provide you with “quick bites” of information: so you can touch and go!



Primary healthcare workers Chris Long and Harriet Beattie with George Town residents who attended the nutrition expo.

## Helping promote healthy hearts

In support of National Heart Week (April 28 – May 4) the RFDS Primary Health team ran a mini nutrition expo in George Town as a free community awareness event.

Guest speaker was dietitian Stephen Hodgkinson who presented on portion control, label reading, dietary fibre and healthy meal planning.

Stephen then spent the rest of the expo speaking to people one-on-one and answering questions.

Primary Health Care manager Nicole Grose said the event was well attended by an enthusiastic group of locals who all took away some life-enhancing messages.

Thanks to Simplot they were also able to take away free bags of vegetables!

“Diabetes Tasmania was also represented and the community enjoyed the physical activities and recipe resources,” Nicole said.



Mechanical engineer Jonathon Edwards assists with aircraft maintenance when Greg Foot is on leave.

## Superb base safety effort

RFDS Tasmania Base manager Simon Froude couldn't have been more proud than to be advised that the Launceston base has been recognised for its excellent safety record over the past 10 years.

“Our record demonstrates no major injuries or incidents in that period. A truly outstanding achievement. We should all be very proud we've kept each other safe from harm,” he said.

“Thank you all for your continued commitment to safe practices and following company processes. Likewise, for briefing me from time to time on any potential hazards or works required at the base.”

RFDS South Eastern Section CEO Greg Sam has provided a framed Certificate of Appreciation that now hangs in the tearoom at the base.

## Support for Reconciliation



Reconciliation Week guest speaker Peter Yu with volunteers Zhi Wen Neoh, Christine Larissey and Gail Wade, and RFDS education officer Jocelyn McLean.

During Reconciliation Week RFDS Tasmania had multiple chances to network with local indigenous people and their supporters through Reconciliation Tasmania events.

A breakfast in Hobart attended by media officer Julie Shelton and board member Dr James Cretan was “both moving and informative in equal measures” and well attended by more than 500 people.

“The Welcome to Country and introduction in palawa kani was extraordinary,” Julie said.

A similar breakfast in Launceston saw a table of 10 filled with RFDS staff and volunteers, all keen to better understand how the state is tracking with reconciliation.

Guest speaker at both events was Peter Yu, a Yawuru man from Broome in the Kimberley region and an inspirational indigenous development advocate at state, national and international level.



## Foot floored by upgrade to sweeper equipment

In the interests of safety and helping our engineer Greg Foot maintain a spotless hangar, RFDS Tasmania has bought a Nilfisk BR752 ride-on scrubber to replace the old floor sweeper that's seen better days.

It's an \$18,000 floor cleaner that will use substantially less water than the old version when sluicing the hangar floor - consequently increasing the drying time and reducing the risk of accident/injury to employees.

The machine significantly increases the operator's efficiency and ability to clean the floor more often, removing dirt, oil, and bird droppings far more effectively than old fashioned methods given the active scrubbing brush, water and vacuum functions.

"It's so easy to jump on and clean a big section of the hangar quickly - a lot of dust blows into the hangar and for safety reasons it's important to maintain a clean environment around the airplane," Greg said.

The purchase was made possible due to generous donations from RFDS Tasmania supporters, and will help ensure the safety of patients as they're transported through the hangar to the awaiting aircraft and while on board.

*Left: Mechanical Engineer Greg Foot tests out the new sweeper.*

## Patient transfer team tested

Our non emergency patient transfer service staff recently had their annual competency training at Kings Meadows under the watchful eye of RFDS Victoria Training and Development Manager David Bodnar.

Some of the learning areas covered were basic life support, stretcher handling, low-risk driving and the new clinical protocols, with everyone passing all aspects of training on the day.

Patient Transport Area Manager Lisa Lord, who also excelled with her "patient" acting skills, said that staff practiced scenarios on the mannequin around patient assessment and interaction, practiced taking blood pressures and blood glucose levels (on a new piece of equipment) and using the defibrillator.

For some it was the first time they had an opportunity to test out the Ferno carry chair, which could come in to play in difficult locations where a stretcher can't get into, such as steps to a house.

Newest member of the 11-strong Patient Transport team, Melissa Blazely, has been with RFDS for six months and she said the training was extremely beneficial.

"I'd completed my CPR training just prior to starting this job, but even that needed to be updated - high performance CPR is a new technique for us where in some situations we go straight into compressions without checking for breathing first."

The Patient Transport Service is based at Western Junction and managed by RFDS Victoria. There are three specialised vehicles available statewide, which take care of low acuity patients.

## Research into hearing loss in country Australia

Hearing loss affects around 3.6 million Australians and is predicted to more than double by 2060 in line with Australia's ageing population.

In 2017, hearing loss was estimated to affect one in seven people in Australia, including as many as three out of four people aged over 70 years.

But hearing loss is not just a problem for the older demographic. For every 10,000 live births, between nine and 12 children have a moderate or greater hearing loss in both ears. Another 23 children per 10,000 will acquire a hearing impairment by the age of 17 years - through accident, illness or other causes.

People living outside major cities (15%) fare the worse and are more likely to experience hearing disorders than people living in major cities (12%), with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians disproportionately impacted by poor ear health and hearing problems compared to non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous children experience an average of 32 months of hearing loss in childhood due to illness, compared with three months hearing loss in non-Indigenous children.

The RFDS does not routinely conduct hearing screening in rural and remote Australia, however it is committed to identifying appropriate service models to inform the national deployment of a hearing-screening program.

In Broken Hill, a second hearing trial is currently underway with 30 Indigenous children in five regional schools, testing a new hearing screening tool to identify potential hearing loss.



Launceston Church Grammar School visited the Launceston base recently with its International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme advocating for learning that is authentic and irresistible. Students in Grade 1/2 Bowles and 1/2 Walton/Prewer ventured out into our hangar as part of their unit of inquiry 'How journeys connect people and places'. They discovered real life examples about how the service connects people and places, how it has improved people's lives and about how the technologies have advanced over time. A story that is revealed in images on the \$20 note!



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