

Welcome to the first twice-yearly edition of Touch Base with RFDS Tasmania through which we will keep you up to date with our latest news and events in Tasmania. We do hope you enjoy the first edition. Please be sure to read the enclosed letter from the 2011 Fred McKay Medical Student Scholarship recipient, **Tim Jones** about his experiences at our Bases in Broken Hill and Launceston.



## RFDS school education program – Look! Up in the Sky

RFDS Tasmania is excited to have recently launched an education program in Tasmanian Government, Independent and Catholic Schools for students in years 3–6.

The program was developed by RFDS Victoria and successfully launched there in 2011. Realising the importance of the educational program, RFDS Tasmania has decided to implement the program and has received a grant and great support from RFDS Victoria to assist our launch in Tasmanian schools.

The aim of the education resource is to give primary school children a comprehensive look at the significant

contribution the RFDS has made to Australia's history and its relevance to all Australians today.

The program provides learning and insight about the RFDS and relates to the focus areas of English, Science, Mathematics and History across the Australian Curriculum.

All Tasmanian primary schools have been sent an invitation to register for the program. The educational resource is available FREE to schools in 2012 and includes quality resources; a teacher's manual, student workbooks, access to the RFDS educational website, a DVD documentary on the work of the RFDS and the opportunity to have the RFDS interactive aeromedical simulator visit their schools in October.

## RFDS Open Day

The RFDS is holding an Open Day at the Launceston Base on Sunday 20 May from 10am to 3pm to celebrate the 84th national anniversary of the Service.

We hope you will join us at the Base where you will be able to tour the

Launceston facility, view the paramedic training simulator and discover the rich history of the Service through a photographic exhibition, memorabilia and informative talks. Morning and afternoon teas will be available.

We look forward to seeing you at the Open Day.



RFDS Tasmania Open Day in 2010



## East Coast morning tea

RFDS Tasmania hosted a morning tea at the St Helens Portland Hall to thank the East Coast community for their ongoing support of the Service.

Over 130 guests from St Helens and surrounding municipalities attended the morning tea to hear President **George Merridew** speak of the current activities of the RFDS, including our support of Primary Health Care initiatives in rural Tasmania.

Special guest **Nick Duigan** - RFDS Ambassador and host of *Hook, Line and Sinker* fishing show - gave a wonderfully entertaining account of his personal RFDS experience after an ultra light plane crash on Flinders Island in 2009.

Nick also spoke of the vital link that the RFDS provides for people who live in rural and remote communities.

The morning tea was a great success and was enjoyed by all who attended.

Above: Nick Duigan, RFDS Tasmanian Ambassador addresses the guests

# Fondly remembered

RFDS Tasmania farewelled two pioneers of the Service in 2011.



The late **Neil Beattie** (left) served as an engineer, pilot and chief flying instructor with the Tasmanian Aero Club, Evandale and taught

hundreds of pilots to fly. In the 1950's Neil was involved in charter and aeromedical flying to the Furneaux Islands. In 1960 he began a 15 year commitment carrying out aeromedical and emergency flights for RFDS Tasmania in all weather conditions, day and night. Neil is survived by his wife **Margaret** and three daughters.



The late **Mr Eric Birtles** served for over 40 years as a former Councillor, Past President and Life Member of the RFDS. He represented

RFDS Tasmania on the National Board and advanced the construction of the RFDS hangar at Launceston Airport. Eric will be remembered as a very strong supporter of the Service. Sadly, his wife **Margaret** passed away a short time after his death.

Above: Dr "Spot" Turnbull, Mr Eric Birtles, Mr Laurie Shea

## RFDS supports the Flinders Island community

RFDS Tasmania continues to support the Flinders Island community by providing airfares for Launceston dental personnel to travel to the island to treat local patients. In 2008, RFDS Tasmania supplied a new dental chair and associated equipment to improve the dental service on the island.

Recently, RFDS Tasmanian Manager, **Simon Froude** travelled to Flinders Island to present an emergency



**Sue Morey, Dr Sonia Singh, Simon Froude and Dr Birender Singh at the presentation**

evacuation mattress to **Dr Birender Singh** and **Dr Sonia Singh** from the Flinders Island Multi-Purpose Centre. The evacuation mattress is used to transfer emergent trauma patients in a safe and protective environment.

## Thanks to our supporters

The RFDS thanks all the individuals and organisations who kindly fundraise to support the vital work of the Service in Tasmania. Recent fundraising events include:

- > The Launceston Golf Club Lady Members held a benevolent golf day
- > **Gillian Woods**, RFDS Tasmania Life Member from Flinders Island held the annual musical soiree at her home
- > **Philip & Nikki de Bomford** organised a charity Fly-In at Vale airstrip
- > **Trevor 'Dusty' Winwood** and committee held two 'Country Music Afternoons' at the King of Burnie
- > The committee from Connections Op Shop raised funds through their voluntary work at the Opportunity Shop

Below: Trevor 'Dusty' Winwood performs



**Ernest Annear (first Pilot), Dr Oldum (first Doctor) Bill Ambury (first Engineer) at Broken Hill.**  
Photo courtesy of Burt Stremple collection

## Tasmania's own Ernest Annear

Tasmanian born **Ernest Annear** was the first RFDS pilot at Broken Hill.

Born in Tasmania, Ern trained at Western Junction to become a pilot. In 1937 he delivered the first aircraft, a DH83 Fox Moth VH-UQM 'Dromana', provided under a charter agreement with Australian National Airways (ANA) to Broken Hill.

During the first few weeks of service, Ernest and **Dr Oldum**, the first Australian Aerial Medical Service doctor, flew a series of flights to outlying towns and stations to stress to the townsfolk the importance of providing and maintaining suitable landing strips for safe operations.

The commencement of the service in Broken Hill was not without incident. On 26 June the newly acquired 'Fox Moth' struck trees and crashed on

take-off to Pine Ridge. The 'Fox Moth' was recovered and trucked to Broken Hill where it was repaired and returned to service. Ernest continued as the pilot at Broken Hill for several months until he was rotated back to ANA. Unfortunately the Fox Moth was later destroyed in a hangar fire.

Ernest was born in Sidmouth, Tasmania in 1905, and awarded the Air Force Cross for outstanding courage and distinguished service during the Second World War. The quiet and unassuming Ernest Annear passed away on 5 April, 1997.

Ern's family presented RFDS Tasmania with a commemorative plaque as a tribute of his service and this is proudly displayed at the Launceston Base.