

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Adelaide Base heralds new era for RFDS in SA

The \$13 million RFDS Adelaide Base marks the start of a new era for the Royal Flying Doctor Service as it delivers 24/7 emergency retrieval services, inter-hospital transfers and primary health care services to all South Australians.

Officially opening the facility today, RFDS Central Operations Chairman David Hills said the new aeromedical base, made possible by fundraising, bequests, corporate and public donations, will enable the RFDS to provide the finest care for all South Australians for decades to come.

“Four years in the planning and development, this purpose-built medical and aviation facility is delivering enhanced patient care and comfort in a patient transfer facility designed and equipped to complement any new hospital,” Mr Hills says.

“It is providing a modern and safe workplace for our staff and health service delivery partners working around the clock, while also generating operational efficiencies and capacity by replacing outdated premises and co-locating all RFDS staff previously spread across two Adelaide locations.”

Mr Hills said the new Adelaide Base had been designed for future growth in its location off Tapleys Hills Road with room to expand to allow RFDS to value-add to its patient services in SA and the Northern Territory.

“The purpose-built facility is prepared for growth, including the expansion and diversification of our fleet to incorporate the introduction of SA’s first permanently configured aeromedical jet in late 2018,” Mr Hills says.

Mr Hills said the new base would serve to strengthen the RFDS’ already close working ties with SA Government emergency medical services and as the provider of fixed-wing inter-hospital transfer and retrieval services in the state.

“The RFDS is proud to be the foundation tenant in the new aeromedical precinct at the western end of Adelaide Airport, which will eventually be home to our SA State Retrieval Service partners in MedSTAR, along with rotary-wing providers,” Mr Hills says.

“The Adelaide Base is the single biggest investment by RFDS Central Operations into the well-being of all South Australians – city and country alike – and is a testimony to the truly outstanding support we receive from our donors, bequestors, volunteers, corporate sponsors and key stakeholders.”

Designed by a team led by consulting architect Walter Brooke & Associates and construction headed by Sarah Constructions Pty Ltd, the project proceeded from its launch in December 2014 under the guidance of project leader, RFDS General Manager of Business Development, Ollie Kratounis.

Key features of the RFDS Adelaide Base include:

- stretcher bay able to manage up to eight patients comfortably;
- stabilisation bay for acute patients;
- refreshment facilities for seated patients and escorts;
- multiple under cover ambulance parking bays;
- private rest quarters/amenities for crews;
- hangar large enough to house six Pilatus PC-12 aircraft;
- capacity for nine aircraft on the tarmac apron; and
- state-of-the-art engineering maintenance store and workshop.

RFDS Central Operations first established hangar facilities at Adelaide Airport in the early 1990s and, after taking over air ambulance services then operated by St John Ambulance, transferred 3,000 patients in 1995 at its former facility at the airport.

Today, the RFDS transfers more than 6,000 patients every year through its Adelaide Base, serviced by its Adelaide, Port Augusta, Alice Springs and Broken Hill operations.

“Without a doubt, our new patient facilities will add greatly to the comfort of our patients and improve efficiency of operations for our staff,” CEO John Lynch says.

“On the first day of operations for our new base on September 8, there were 18 patients moved through the new patient transfer facility. We are looking forward to a long and fruitful working life for our new base.”

The new RFDS Adelaide Base completes a decade of capital investment in infrastructure upgrades at RFDS Port Augusta and Alice Springs, as well as the on-going replacement of the RFDS’s fleet of ‘flying intensive care units’ in South and Central Australia.

“Looking ahead, we plan to invest more than \$50 million over the next five years on the replacement of three medically-equipped Pilatus PC12 aircraft, the new Pilatus PC24 aeromedical jet and medical equipment upgrades of \$1 million per annum,” Mr Lynch says.

“We look forward to the continued support from our donors, bequestors, volunteers, corporate sponsors, staff and service-delivery partners on this journey with us.”

RFDS at Adelaide Airport – Timeline

- 1991 – hangar leased in General Aviation area of Adelaide Airport as RFDS takes over air ambulance services from St John Ambulance
- 1995 – RFDS employs Flight Nurses full-time at Adelaide Base
- 1998 – annex added to Adelaide Base for engineering storage
- 2013 – extension to office facilities at Adelaide Base completed
- 2014 – new Adelaide Base on greenfields site off Tapleys Hill Road announced
- 2015 – construction commences
- 2016 – RFDS Adelaide Base completed and operational

In 2015/16 RFDS Central Operations (SA & NT) conducted:

- 9,002 patient evacuations
- 6,661 mental health consultations
- 688 immunisations
- 48,021 patient contacts
- 15,468 aircraft landings

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