

AirDoctor



From the Chairman & Chief Executive >



PETER DE CURE AM Chairman

TONY VAUGHAN ASM Chief Executive

WITH 2023 ON THE HORIZON, we've taken the opportunity to reflect upon what has been another busy and productive year caring for Australians. from the ground up.

Over the past 12 months, the RFDS delivered more than 56,000 episodes of care to South Australians and Northern Territorians, including more than 9,000 aeromedical evacuations.

Learn more about this timely emergency care through the eyes of our patients: an inner-city resident who was airlifted after an outback car rollover (page 3) and a helicopter pilot who had a freak accident in the Red Centre (pages 4-5).

With a commitment to providing whole-of-life patient care, the RFDS has been nimble and innovative in our support of patients across our broad spectrum of primary healthcare services. In 2021/22, we saw a 46 per cent increase in oral health outreach clinics and a 30 per cent increase in mental health consultations from the previous year.

The vital impact of our Wellbeing & Mental Health Service has been highlighted through a unique national advocacy and fundraising campaign, which has brought farming communities together to support the RFDS (page 6).

We also invite you travel to the base of Uluru with our Oral Health Care team, as they deliver care and treatment to the remote community of Mutitjulu (page 13).

Meanwhile, as part of our broader ongoing pandemic response airlifting patients to safety and delivering vital supplies and treatment, this year we administered more than 10,000 COVID-19 vaccinations across the central corridor of Australia.

More than ever, we recognise the extraordinary level of dedication and determination of our crews - from the nurses on the ground to our aviation teams - in executing these logistically challenging operations to ensure health care can reach the furthest corner of the country.

In this edition, we also pay homage to longserving RFDS pilot Ray Mundy after more than three decades with the Flying Doctor (page 10), and extend our deepest sympathies to the Royal family on the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, who was a strong advocate for the RFDS over many years (page 11).

As an organisation, we couldn't do what we do without the enduring efforts of every employee and the constant support of our corporate partners, community fundraisers and our Ground Crew - Auxiliaries, Support Groups and individual donors.

To all friends of the Flying Doctor, I offer my heartfelt thanks for your support of our life-saving service.

Thank you. We hope you enjoy this edition of AirDoctor.

Fit al Com Tong Vasel PETER DE CURE AM Chairman

TONY VAUGHAN ASM Chief Executive

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The RFDS acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.

Explorer's narrow escape >

AFTER BEING AIRLIFTED to safety by the Flying Doctor, Adelaide retiree Stefan Kosak was told by surgeons that he was just "one millimetre off dead."

In July 2022, the 72-year-old and a group of friends embarked on a six-week road trip from Adelaide to Alice Springs, before they planned to head west, down the coast towards Perth and back home.

For the avid four-wheel drivers, it began as another familiar outback adventure - however. this one took an unexpected twist when the group reached the heart of the Gibson Desert, 900 kilometres west of Alice Springs.

"I was in the last of four cars - hanging back because of the dust," Stefan said.

"I was going around a corner that kept getting sharper, when the car started jumping on corrugations that were extremely high and hard.

"The car spun 180 degrees – it landed on the roof, then on its side and then back on its wheels.

"I've corrected a lot of cars on dirt roads but there's nothing I could do. It just happened... bang."

Trapped in the car, Stefan immediately began checking his limbs and looking for blood. Observing nothing abnormal, he phoned his friends ahead to alert them to turn back.

"They had to crowbar me out because the doors were flattened," he said.

"I was thinking to myself, 'Heck, I got out of that." but then my neck started hurting."

The group called for emergency help. Before long. Stefan was in an ambulance with local nurses bound for Kiwirrkurra, the nearest community and airstrip to the crash.

"Once we got to Kiwirrkurra, my neck was really hurting. I couldn't move it and I was told to be totally immobile," he said.

"I had no option. I was approximately 850 kilometres west of Alice Springs, surrounded by dirt road. I couldn't bear the thought of going back to Alice Springs by road."

The immediate response was the Royal Flying Doctor Service will get you.

- Stefan Kosak

An RFDS crew with a specialist from the Medical Retrieval and Consultation Centre (MRaCC) was tasked from Alice Springs to Kiwirrkurra and assessed Stefan, before airlifting him back to Alice Springs for further scans and treatment.

"They came in with about a cubic metre of gear and they checked me over, both my heart and my neck, and said the back of my neck was all black and that I needed to fly back," Stefan said.

"It was beautifully done, everyone gave incredible support - I never felt in danger or at risk."

After arriving at Alice Springs Hospital, Stefan was told he had broken his 2nd and 3rd vertebrae, "snapping them right through."

"One of the surgeons there came in and the first thing he said to me was, 'You are lucky,'" Stefan said.

"'You were one millimetre off dead.'"

A week later, Stefan returned to Adelaide in a neck brace; three months on, he is back travelling and living life to the full.

While disappointed he didn't get to complete his four-wheel drive expedition. Stefan credits his remarkable recovery to the care he received from the RFDS, Kiwirrkurra Community Clinic and Alice Springs Hospital.

"I don't think anyone expects to rollover, break their neck and be put in a plane and evacuated. But it happened to me and I'm forever thankful to the Royal Flying Doctor Service for rescuing me," he said.

"I've been a lot of places and no country has the Royal Flying Doctor Service. To me, it's the best service in the world. It virtually saved my life."

For 24-hour medical and emergency assistance in outback SA or NT, call 000. The Flying Doctor will be advised of your emergency and will be on its way.

OUR COVER: RFDS patient Alex Lawrie with his dad Alex Lawrie Snr (story on pages 4-5).

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Chopper crash comeback >



ALEX LAWRIE was just months into his dream job as a helicopter pilot flying tourists around Australia's Red Centre, when an afternoon scenic flight went horribly wrong.

Seconds after taking off, an emergency warning went off, alerting Alex that the chopper was losing power and that there was a problem with the engine.

"I took off on my second last flight for the day and within 30 seconds, the helicopter stopped producing enough power to keep us in the air," he said.

Without enough height to be able to glide back down, the chopper crashed into a sand dune.

Alex and his passengers survived as he made his best efforts to guide the chopper to safety. But for Alex, the worst was yet to come.

"After we crashed, I remember I was hanging upside down from my seatbelt. That was the only pain I could feel," he said.

"I tried to undo my seatbelt to get rid of that pain, but I couldn't undo it. So, I tried to stand up to take the pain off my waist but I wasn't able to do that."

Local first responders rushed to the scene and Alex was loaded onto a helicopter bound for the closest clinic, Yulara Health Centre, to meet the RFDS, who had been alerted and tasked from its Alice Springs Base.

The RFDS crew with a specialist from the Medical Retrieval Consultation Centre (MRaCC) took as much equipment as the aircraft could carry, allowing for every eventuality possible, due to the violent nature of helicopter crashes and likelihood of spinal injuries.

On arrival, Alex was assessed by the team, who did an ultrasound to check for internal damage, stabilised and safely immobilised him, before being safely airlifted to Adelaide for further treatment.

"The RFDS crew was excellent, very professional, very calming," he said.

"It was just comforting to know that they were there to support me in this terrible time."

Alex was taken to the Royal Adelaide Hospital, where he underwent X-rays and scans before going into surgery for seven hours.



Emerging from the operating theatre with titanium rods holding up his spine, Alex was told that his 13th vertebra had been destroyed.

Alex was diagnosed as a complete paraplegic and received the devastating news that he would never walk again.

There was no sugar coating it or anything – it was, 'Look Alex, these are your injuries and unfortunately you will never walk again.' – Alex Lawrie

"That was heartbreaking and knocked the wind right out of me. It's something no one should hear," he said.

"But I do remember at the time that I was very adamant that I was going to walk again."

For the past four and a half years, Alex has been working on his rehabilitation with the help of NeuroPhysics, an exercise-based therapy that helps train new neural pathways in the brain to help the legs function.

When Alex first started therapy, he could barely get out of his chair. Today, he can leg press his own body weight.

"I've gone from walking wearing calipers and using a wheelie walker... to now where I'm just walking, no knee braces, no supports, purely just the wheelie walker," he said. "To look back on being told I'd spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair, to where I am now, walking by myself and seeing my legs start to regain muscle and strength – it's incredible."

In May 2021, three years after the accident, Alex visited crews at the RFDS Alice Springs Base to handover a \$5,000 donation, which he believes, "Isn't anywhere near enough to say thank you."

"To me, the Royal Flying Doctor Service means the world. Without their fast response, care, professionalism and ability to know where I needed to be and what was going on, I wouldn't be where I am today," he said.

"The Royal Flying Doctor Service played a massive part in my recovery."

Alex said he also owes it to his family for keeping him motivated and moving forward, especially on his down days.

His dad, Alex Lawrie Snr describes his son as an inspiration to everyone who knows him and said the RFDS provided the comfort to his family when they needed it most.

"I had every parent's worst nightmare in receiving a phone call that this had happened," he said.

"But the moment that I spoke to the people that were looking after him in care – the RFDS, the doctors – it had a calming influence on our family and I knew that he couldn't get better treatment and professionalism."







Scan the QR to donate now and help others like Alex in times of need.

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"IT TAKES GUTS to get your gear off and it takes guts to talk about mental health."

This is the mantra behind The Naked Farmer, the brainchild of Ben Brooksby, a fifth-generation farmer currently based in Penola, South Australia.

In 2017, the 29-year-old shared a photo on Instagram showing himself naked in a truck full of lentils, with the initial goal of promoting Australian farmers.

This one tasteful nude photo received a massive response and has now evolved into a nationwide movement, encouraging farmers to share revealing photos and stories, raising awareness and funds for mental health.

"The whole aim back then was to educate people on where their food and fibre comes from and the hardship farmers go through to provide food for us all." he said.

"Within a week, it blew up. So, I thought I really wanted to use this platform and that's when it transformed into raising awareness around mental health."

When Ben was a young boy, he struggled with anxiety, to the point where he felt overwhelmed walking into his local grocery store.

It wasn't until he sought professional help later in life that he learned more about managing and embracing mental health challenges.

"For me growing up, I had no idea what anxiety was – I thought I was just scared of people, and it didn't make sense to me until I was about 20," he said.

"I think the biggest barrier is learning about it for starters. Then it's about having that help accessible for people."

Farmers often work so hard that they push through their problems. I've seen a change in the stigma, but we've still got a long way to go.

Ben Brooksby

As The Naked Farmer movement continues to grow, Ben meets people from across the country who want to bare it all for mental health.

"I see the ripple effect that mental health issues can have in our communities, families and our friends." he said.

"We all play our part, and this movement has been a way to get on people's mobile screens, get their attention to stop and learn a little bit along the way."

In 2021, through its various fundraising efforts selling merchandise and calendars, The Naked Farmer raised more than \$20,000 for the RFDS.

"We've always been raising money for the RFDS because we know the impact they have across Australia. Their footprint is huge and we appreciate their boots on the ground amongst these communities," he said.

"It's not me, it's the whole Naked Farmer community supporting this, people buying the calendar. Everyone deserves a pat on the back for raising that money."

Mental health training meets the outback >

THE RFDS has recently launched Mental Health First Aid training programs for remote communities, providing practical skills for outback residents and workers to support family and friends in need.

The two-day workshops equip participants with the knowledge and confidence to recognise, connect and respond to someone experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis – covering topics including depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

The program kicked off in August in William Creek, SA, before running in partnership with the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association in Katherine in late October.

The First Aid program is another element of the RFDS's broader Mental Health & Wellbeing Service, which provided more than 2,700 consultations across South Australia and the Northern Territory over the last 12 months.

"We see people who live and work on stations and in remote communities, others who are passing through, and people who are part of Aboriginal communities," RFDS Mental Health Service Manager, Justine Cooney said.

"People often forget how important it is to maintain your own mental health and wellbeing when you're living remotely, but it's just as important, if not more important, than for those living in the city."



What are you keeping under your hat?

If you need to lift the lid, your Flying Doctor is here to help. The RFDS Wellbeing & Mental Health Service is available to adults and young people in remote South Australia and the Northern Territory.

South Australia

Ph: 08 8648 9500

Email: portaugusta.wellbeing@flyingdoctor.net

Northern Territory

Ph: 08 8958 8400

 ${\it Email: alices prings.mental health@flying doctor.net}$

Scan the QR for more.





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Views from above >

EVERY 10 MINUTES, the Flying Doctor delivers the finest care to someone living, working or travelling in rural and remote South Australia and the Northern Territory.

As our crews deliver the finest care to the furthest corner, they traverse some incredible parts of the country from the outback to the ocean.

Win one of three RFDS prize packs!

Can you match each photo taken from the window of an RFDS PC-12 with the correct pin on the map?

Scan the QR and enter your answers online.



2. WEST MACDONNELL RANGES 3. KINGS CREEK 4. COOBER PEDY 6. LAKE ACRAMAN 5. YALATA

1. ADELAIDE RIVER

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Captain Ray hangs up his wings >

AFTER MORE THAN 30 YEARS of delivering aeromedical services to outback Australians, long-serving Royal Flying Doctor Service pilot Ray Mundy has hung up his wings.

From the Nullarbor to the Birdsville Track, Captain Ray has helped thousands of people in remote areas of South Australia, becoming a household name for generations of families in the bush.

"Over the last 30 years there wouldn't be too many families that I haven't had an association with and that's been pretty special," Ray said.

"Learning the stories of RFDS founder John Flynn was a big inspiration for me.

It was at 10 years old that Ray flew in an aircraft for the first time, immediately falling in love with the aerial view over the desert landscapes surrounding Lake Eyre and Far North SA.

Later during high school, it was a chance encounter in the school library that helped Ray realise his dream – then, at 25 years old, he was offered a position at the RFDS Port Augusta Base.

"I was doing Year 11 in Perth when this magazine caught my eye – it was about the Flying Doctor and had all these amazing stories in it," he said

"I pinched it out of the library and thought, 'This is what I want to be doing."

From 1988 to 2022, Ray has seen the RFDS evolve as one of the world's largest aeromedical organisations.



"At that point, we had four pilots in South Australia and it expanded from there." he said.

"For my first few years, all we had was charts and a rough form of computer navigation that was very unreliable. The GPS made a huge difference to how we operated in the outback – it was a big step in reliability.

"I saw the expansion of capability and the South Australian people's expectations of what the RFDS could do, grow."

I would tell myself, 'You're more than a pilot – you're an advocate for the outback people.'

- Captain Ray Mundy 🕡



"I remember there was a horrific car rollover at Nilpinna on the Oodnadatta Track – there was a couple of kids in a seriously bad way with spinal injuries. It was last light and I had five minutes to get in the air." he said.

"As the sun went down, we landed. We had to use car lights (positioned to illuminate the highway) to

take off, but we got those two kids out safely and they survived.

"It was a genuine community effort to make it all happen and solve the complications involved with that flight."

In August, Ray captained his final tasking with the RFDS from Whyalla to Adelaide, where he was greeted by colleagues and family.

As he looks forward to his next adventure flying with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, he is confident that the Flying Doctor will continue to build its vital service for the people of the outback.

"We're on the nation's \$20 note. You don't get to be on that unless at some level you hold values that this country holds dear," he said.

"I hope we continue to deliver these values of service and contribution to the Australian people."



Scan the QR to read our full Q&A with Captain Ray.



Remembering the Queen >

IN 1954, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II visited the RFDS Broken Hill Base and chatted over the wireless with a remote South Australian homestead 450 kilometres away.

On the receiving end was outback mum, Hazel Mitchell of Muloorina Station on Lake Eyre, who was given the role of describing to Her Majesty the importance of the Flying Doctor to people in rural and remote areas of the country.

"Without this great mantle of safety, we mothers would not dare to bring up our families so far from medical help," Hazel said via radio.

In her address, Her Majesty spoke of the "unstinted admiration" of the men, women and children who chose to create homes in outback Australia, acknowledging how the Flying Doctor supports these communities.

"I have heard so much of the work of the Flying Doctor Service and the security and comfort it brings to every part of the outback. I express my admiration to all those, past and present, who have contributed to its splendid work," Her Majesty said via radio.

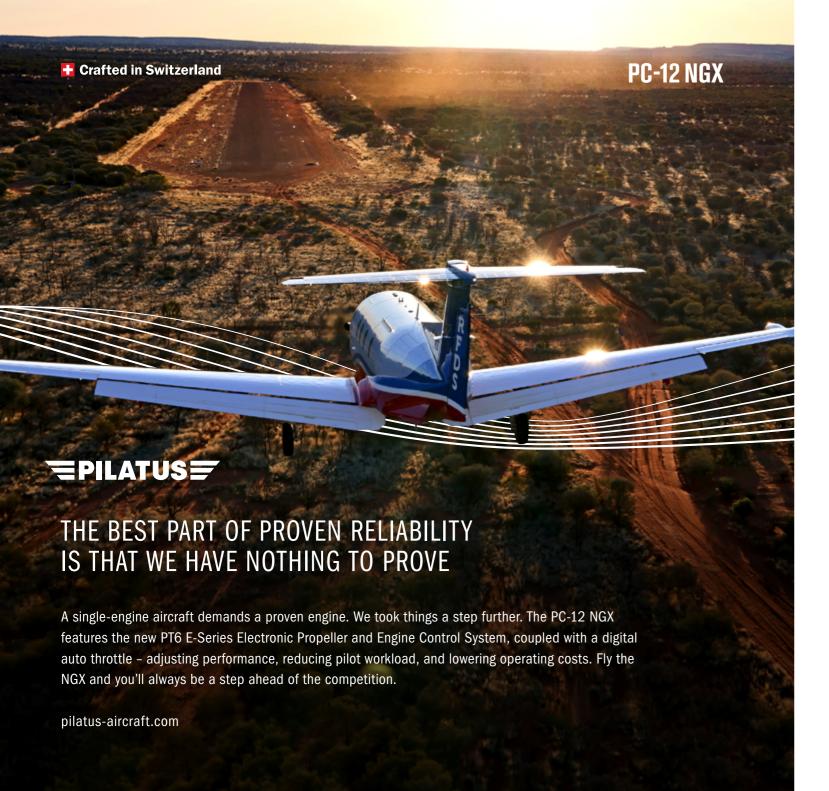
Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip's 1954 visit Down Under was a turning point that catapulted the Flying Doctor Service into the international spotlight – the Flying Doctor Service was given the royal assent and became the renowned Royal Flying Doctor Service we know today.

The RFDS pays homage and extends deepest sympathies to the Royal Family on the death of Her Majesty, who has been a trusted and guiding light over the last century.

We thank Her Majesty for the gift of the Royal Charter, and for the support that we have received from her and the extended Royal Family over the past decades.



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Healthy smiles, happy lives >

AT THE BASE OF ULURU, the Flying Doctor is working together with the Aboriginal Community of Mutitjulu to promote healthy smiles and happy lives.

Since March 2020, the RFDS Remote Oral Health Care team has been flying into the community, working in partnership with Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and the local Anangu, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people to deliver treatment, preventative care and health education.

While initially running clinics in Mutitjulu over a couple of days, RFDS Senior Dentist Dr Vaibhav Garg said the team now stays in community for up to two weeks due to the uptake from locals.

"We have little kids that run over as soon as they see the dental truck, and when they see us coming in, they want to have their teeth checked and the fluoride toothpaste put on their teeth," he said.

Across Central Australia, centuries of Dreaming stories have been told about Uluru – the sacred site is known to traditional owners as the resting place for the past ancient spirits of the region.

Many of these stories hail from Mutitjulu, which is home to around 300 residents including Senior Anangu Traditional Owner, Leroy Lester.

Being hundreds of kilometres from the nearest dental clinic, Leroy panicked about his overall health when he started to experience tooth pain.



he RFDS Oral Health Care team treats more than 1,600 patients across SA and NT every year

"They (the RFDS) come out to community so that saves me a trip 600 kilometres driving in town. Then they got X-ray here too.

"To me, the RFDS is a very good help for not only Anangu, but everybody in the outback. Dentists are just one aspect of a whole range of medical services that they do."

We have mums bringing in all of the family – we have sisters, aunties and elders who come in and ask us what sort of message they can be helping to pass on about good oral health.

- Dr Vaibhav Garg

Temiah Randall-Cross and her family are regular patients of the RFDS's fly-in oral health clinic at Mutitiulu.

The 12-year-old has become well-acquainted with preventative care and is one of many community members spreading the message to

others about the connection between oral health and general wellbeing.

"The thing I like about the Royal Flying Doctor Service is that they can just come out – you don't have to make appointments in advance, you can just go up to them and ask if they're free," she said.

"Marcy (RFDS Dental Hygienist) was telling me today if you don't brush your teeth, the germs and all that can stay on your teeth and then you get cavities."

In the last 12 months, the RFDS has delivered 38 multi-day Oral Health Outreach Clinics in remote communities across Northern Territory and South Australia, treating a total 1,664 patients.

"It's an amazing success of what we can achieve when we work with community partners," Dr Garg said.

"The more services like oral health that we can link with the clinic and offer the community, the more opportunity people have to take control of their own health."



Scan the QR to watch the video and go behind the scenes.



Show of force >

THE FLYING DOCTOR was excited to be back at the Royal Adelaide Show for the first time since 2018.

From toddlers to old timers, more than 7,000 people visited the RFDS display to chat to our team and learn more about what we do.

"We were once again blown away by the interest in and support for the Flying Doctor – particularly the sheer number of children wanting to hop aboard our simulator and be a pilot, doctor or nurse for the day," RFDS Fundraising Manager, Anthea Rice said.

"People are fascinated by the distances we cover across the outback, the complex logistics behind our operations and just how many episodes of care we deliver every day throughout rural and remote Australia."

Thank you to the more than 50 staff, community volunteers and corporate volunteers from Elders, Beyond Bank, ANZ and Beach Energy who gave their time to help and share more about the work we do at the Royal Adelaide Show.

Would you like to learn more about volunteering with the RFDS?

Scan the QR to find out more.







Oceans to Outback >

MORE THAN 5,700 EAGER AUSTRALIANS, participated in Oceans to Outback, the RFDS's very first national fundraising fitness challenge.

The Flying Doctor invited participants to walk, run or cycle during the month of October, while raising funds to help the Flying Doctor deliver life-saving care across the country.

As they progressed, participants were guided on a virtual journey across Australia, stopping at eight featured RFDS locations along the way.

Together over the month-long adventure, participants travelled over 300,000 kilometres and raised more than \$1.1 million.







Raising the 'steaks' >

THE SOUTHERN GRASSFED CARCASE CLASSIC (SGCC) made their beefiest donation ever to the Flying Doctor, raising a whopping \$50,000

Each year, the largest annual beef carcase competition in the Southern Hemisphere contributes 1 per cent of proceeds from all entries to acknowledge the RFDS's support of people living in SA's South East.



Support for cancer patients >

FOR ALMOST 15 YEARS, the Tarpeena Cancer Support Group has been raising money for cancer organisations and local hospitals.

Recently the Group gifted a generous \$5,000 donation to the Flying Doctor in appreciation of the RFDS's support for local cancer patients in SA's South East.

It was like-minded support from the community that enabled the Flying Doctor to build a Patient Transfer Facility in Mount Gambier, the first of its kind in regional South Australia. In the last 12 months, RFDS crews have landed 560 times in the Mount to respond to medical emergencies and provide the finest care to people in need of life-saving surgery or specialist care.

Give a life saving gift this Christmas >







OUTBACK SONGMAN -Audiobook by Ted Egan

Ted Egan is the quintessential bush storyteller. He has rubbed shoulders with some of the best-known and least-known of his countrymen and women and he can wring a heart-wrenching song out of a beer carton. In Outback Songman, Ted recounts the story of his rich and extraordinary life.

\$29.95 (includes P&H within Australia)

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RFDS Merchandise			
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If you have any questions, please call us on 08 8238 3333 during business hours. Thank you for supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

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'Donate' a Christmas gift that saves lives >



Buy an RFDS Gift Card

Are you looking for a great Christmas solution for that hard-to-buy-for person? This Christmas, make a donation to the RFDS and we will send you an RFDS card for you to give to the recipient.

Each Gift Card showcases a signature image of our RFDS teams at work, making it the perfect addition to the mantelpiece.

Give a Gift Card that makes a real difference!

It's simple!

- 1 Four Gift Cards are available, with values of \$25, \$30, \$50 and \$75. Each Gift Card includes a printed Christmas greeting and mentions that a donation has been made to the RFDS as your Christmas gift to them.
- 2 Choose one or several, and complete the order form inside the AirDoctor magazine, or call us to order on (08) 8238 3333.
- 3 The amount you pay for Gift Cards is a tax deductible donation to the RFDS - we will send you a receipt.
- 4 We will send you the Gift Cards, with envelopes. Just add your name (and personal greeting if you wish) before giving your Gift Cards to family and friends on Christmas Day.

RFDS Christmas Gift Cards indicate you have given a Christmas donation to the RFDS with your recipient in mind. They have no cash value and are not redeemable for purchase of RFDS merchandise.

Card size: 99mm x 210mm wide (DL).



\$25 Desert connections



\$30 Sunset chat



\$50 Outback retrieval



\$75 Welcome home

Save lives from the ground >

Join our Ground Crew by making a recurring donation to help keep the Flying Doctor flying.



Scan the QR code for more information or contact Alexandra Growden:

(08) 8238 3334 alexandra.growden@flyingdoctor.net

