

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Flying Doctor marks 90 years of saving lives**

What started out as an 'experiment' 90 years ago has grown to become the largest aeromedical organisation in the world comprising a national emergency network performing over 100 aeromedical evacuations across the country every day.

In 2018 the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (RFDS) is celebrating 90 years of saving lives in the Australian outback and, more recently, delivering the finest care to injured and critically-ill patients living in regional and metropolitan centres.

"In our first year of operation with an aircraft leased from Qantas, the Reverend John Flynn's 'Flying Doctor' scheme provided medical assistance to 255 patients," says Charlie Paterson, General Manager Marketing & PR, RFDS Central Operations.

"Today, with a fleet of 69 aircraft and network of 24 aeromedical bases across the country, RFDS crews airlift over 100 patients throughout Australia every day," Mr Paterson says.

"Locally, **RFDS crews perform 15 aeromedical evacuations in South Australia every day**, either an outback retrieval or the transfer of a patient from one of our country hospitals to one of Adelaide's major hospitals for life-saving surgery or specialist medical treatment."

Latest figures reveal RFDS crews conducted **5,400 flights in South Australia** in 2017, including the 'Top 10' locations and landings:

- **579 – Mt Gambier**
- **484 – Whyalla**
- **460 – Port Pirie**
- **424 – Renmark**
- **416 – Port Lincoln**
- **379 – Kadina**
- **220 – Ceduna**
- **197 – Kingscote**
- **159 – Maitland**
- **155 – Coober Pedy**

The RFDS also delivers critical support to those who live in urban centres. On a weekly basis an RFDS aircraft will transfer an Adelaide resident to an interstate hospital for life-saving surgery such as organ transplant and heart surgery on newborn babies.

“The RFDS is still needed 24/7 for members of the community in their time of need, but it cannot continue to save lives without the on-going support of the community to keep its crews in the sky,” Mr Paterson says.

“The RFDS relies on bequests and donations to meet the shortfall in its operational funding and to finance the replacement of its ‘flying intensive care units’ – at a cost of \$7 million each,” he says.

“In 2018 we celebrate a major milestone, and we are calling on the community to keep getting behind the ‘Flying Doctor’ by making a donation or by supporting local fundraising events and activities of our dedicated volunteer RFDS Support Groups and community fundraisers.”

- **Donations call 1800 813 318 or visit [flyingdoctor.org.au/sant/donate](http://flyingdoctor.org.au/sant/donate)**

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#### **ABOUT THE RFDS**

Established in 1928 by the Reverend John Flynn (Australian \$20 note), the RFDS is the largest and most comprehensive aeromedical organisation in the world.

In addition to the aeromedical retrieval of the critically-ill or injured, the RFDS also delivers a broad range of essential primary and preventative health care services, including tele-health, mental health, oral health and chronic disease management.

Today, the RFDS provides the finest care to more than 300,000 Australians each year – equivalent to one person every two minutes.

In addition to assisting those living, working and travelling in rural and remote Australia, the RFDS also delivers critical support to those who live in urban centres. This includes the regular transfer of patients to interstate hospitals for life-saving surgery such as organ transplant and heart surgery on newborn babies.

The RFDS is a not-for-profit organisation. While supported by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, the RFDS relies on bequests, sponsorships and donations to bridge the gap in its operational funding and to purchase its ‘flying intensive care units’ at a cost of more than \$7 million each.

RFDS Central Operations is responsible for delivering 24/7 emergency aeromedical and essential primary health care services throughout South Australia and the southern half of the Northern Territory. It operates four aeromedical bases located in Adelaide, Port Augusta, Alice Springs and Darwin, as well as three primary health care facilities in Marree, Andamooka and Marla in outback South Australia.