

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 24 April 2018

Public support needed to save lives, 90 years on

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) will celebrate 90 years of saving lives in May, and it is calling on the community to 'dig deep' to keep the Flying Doctor landing 15 times a day in South Australia.

"As we celebrate 90 years of saving lives this May, we are calling on the community to get behind their 'Flying Doctor' by making a donation to the **RFDS 90th Anniversary Appeal** – to ensure we can keep our crews in the air for the people of South Australia and beyond," says Charlie Paterson, General Manager Marketing & PR for RFDS Central Operations.

"Donations can be made in the collection tins of our hard-working volunteers on their local RFDS Badge Day, or by returning the distinctive RFDS envelope arriving in letterboxes in early May. Telephone and online are always welcome," Mr Paterson says.

"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," he 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."

"Community generosity makes a real difference to the tens of thousands of families who rely on the RFDS each year – something people like Adelaide mother Rajani Koirlal knows only too well."

RFDS flies newborn to Melbourne for life-saving surgery

Rajani's twin pregnancy was traumatically cut short when her waters suddenly broke at just 28 weeks. Rajani was immediately admitted to the Women's & Children's Hospital for monitoring and medication to prevent the births proceeding and to boost the development of the unborn babies' lungs in readiness for their premature birth.

Four weeks later, Rajani's tiny twin sons were delivered by caesarean section, eight weeks before their full-term.

Concern grew for the smaller of the two boys, Arnav, who weighed just 970 grams at birth, and was actually losing weight.

Doctors determined that Arnav had been born with a coarctation of the aorta, a dangerous abnormality. A baby born with this condition is at high risk of heart failure unless the narrowing is repaired urgently by highly-specialised surgery.

Just days old, Arnav needed this surgery urgently – at the Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne.

The RFDS was alerted and a RFDS aircraft soon departed Adelaide Airport, providing sick little Arnav critical care in the air.

Because mum Rajani needed to stay in Adelaide to care for Arnav’s twin brother Ayush, Arnav was accompanied by his father Dipak on the emergency aeromedical RFDS flight to Melbourne.

After successful surgery, Arnav made his second RFDS flight, returning to Adelaide for an emotional reunion with his mother and brother Ayush.

Tiny Arnav immediately began to gain weight and made a complete recovery. Today, he is a happy five-year-old boy enjoying life to the full.

Around once a week the RFDS will airlift a critically-ill patient interstate for life-saving surgery; these include newborn babies like Arnav for specialist cardiac surgery or organ recipients for transplant surgery – any time of the day or night.

The boys’ father, Dipak, remembers the experience clearly:

“There are no words to explain how thankful we were, and still are,” he says.

“Thank you Flying Doctor – and keep doing what you are doing so more little ones like Arnav can benefit.”

Donations to the RFDS can be made by calling 1800 813 318 or visiting www.flyingdoctor.org.au/sant/donate

Please support the RFDS Badge Day collectors on Friday 11 May in the following locations:

- **Adelaide Central Markets**
- **Adelaide Railway Station**
- **Glenelg**
- **Norwood**
- **Marryatville**
- **Mitcham**
- **Mt Barker**
- **Gawler**

(ends)

EDITOR's NOTE: a high resolution photo of Arnav Koirlal is available on request.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Robin Hopkinson
Marketing Specialist
RFDS Central Operations
08 8238 3328 or 0407 822 510
media@flyingdoctor.net