



Media Release

Flying Doctor Community Transport Expands in Heathcote

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The addition of a new vehicle to the Royal Flying Doctor Service's (RFDS) Community Transport fleet will mean greater capacity for the program, which is run in partnership with Heathcote Health.

The free service provides eligible community members living within 30km of Heathcote with free transport to health care appointments and planned activity groups within a 50km radius of town. The cars are driven by local volunteers and the service is coordinated locally, using RFDS transport scheduling software.

Previously, there had been two vehicles in operation but, with both vehicles regularly booked to capacity, the addition of a third was required.

"The RFDS Community Transport service has surpassed expectations, with more than 4,000 transports taking place since the program began in mid-2018 and an average of 17 trips per day," says Dr Melanie Trivett, RFDS Victoria General Manager, Primary Health Care.

"The addition of the new vehicle allows us to be responsive to the Heathcote community's transport needs by increasing service capacity and helping those who don't have access to suitable transport – something that, for so many, can severely limit their access to health care and vital social connection."

More than 390 clients are currently registered with the service. The new vehicle will assist in servicing the demand of those currently registered, while also providing capacity for more eligible users to join. The most common trips are to specialists, hydrotherapy, cancer treatment, physiotherapy and GP appointments, with Bendigo a common destination.

Passengers are able to travel with up to two family members or carers with them, and wheelchairs, walking frames, and mobility scooters can be accommodated.

Residents can enquire about their eligibility for the service by calling 1300 887 678. Once their eligibility is confirmed, bookings can also be made by calling 1300 887 678.

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About the Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria

Now in its 91st year, the not-for-profit Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) has been taking the finest care to the furthest corners of Australia since 1928. The service provides 24 hour emergency cover to 80% of the Australian continent, via a modern fleet of specially equipped aircraft. Within Victoria, the RFDS delivers air and road patient transport and a number of Primary Health Care programs like dental, eye care, rural women's GP and telehealth programs.

