



Royal Flying Doctor Service

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MEDIA RELEASE

RFDS Rio Tinto Life Flight Jet to the rescue

September 16, 2015

Robyn Street has worked as a volunteer fire fighter and ambulance officer over the years, often assisting patients onto Royal Flying Doctor Service aircraft – but never thought she would one day be at the other end of the stretcher.

Robyn and her husband Grant, of Tom Price, were in Karratha for a long weekend away, when she suddenly suffered severe chest pains in the middle of the night.

“I had severe chest pains which were so bad I knew I was in serious trouble; I was having a heart attack,” Robyn said.

“I went straight to Nickol Bay Hospital in Karratha where medical tests revealed that the chemical level in my blood was increasing, indicating a heart attack and my situation could deteriorate.

“It was at this stage medical staff called the flying doctor.”

The RFDS Rio Tinto Life Flight jet was tasked to retrieve Robyn from Karratha and the medical crew, including a fully trained doctor and nurse, began treating her as soon as she was on board the aircraft.

“It was like being in a flying intensive care unit; I was looked after by a highly skilled doctor and nurse, who were both qualified emergency services specialists.

“Then before I knew it, I was in Perth in about an hour and a half and after already receiving vital treatment, was transferred to hospital.”

The Rio Tinto Life Flight Jet helps the RFDS provide extensive 24 hour essential health care services to anyone who lives, works and travels throughout WA.

RFDS chief executive officer Grahame Marshall said the Rio Tinto Life Flight jet has made a tremendous difference to the flying doctor’s ability to respond to the needs of rural, regional and remote WA.

“Since the Rio Tinto Life Flight jet’s first mission in October 2009, the aircraft has evacuated almost 1,500 patients, the majority (over 70%) from the more distant Kimberley and Pilbara regions,” Mr Marshall said.

“Many lives have been saved as a direct result of the Rio Tinto Life Flight.”

He said there was also a huge amount of planning and expertise involved in ensuring that patients like Robyn receive the treatment they need when they need it.

“About one in five patients transported by RFDS in WA have underlying heart disease, and if not treated quickly by specialists, their situation can rapidly worsen,” Mr Marshall said.

“Our medical teams provide an intensive care environment with monitoring, drug availability, and equipment such as cardiac defibrillation and highly trained emergency doctors and nurses capable of advanced cardiac life support in the event of possible deterioration in a patient's clinical condition.

“Our pilots are also specially trained to fly in often challenging conditions and land on remote and unsealed airstrips. In Robyn’s case the staff in our 24 hour State wide co-ordination centre were working closely with the medical and flight crew planning to retrieve her from Karratha, ensuring they had all of the necessary medical equipment and supplies on board to ensure her critical care every step of the way.”

This year marks the 80 year anniversary of the RFDS delivering life-saving outcomes to people in WA. To donate to the RFDS call 08 9417 6400 or email fundraise@rfdswa.com.au

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Pic:

Robyn, an emergency management officer with Rio Tinto at Tom Price, has now made a full recovery.