



Royal Flying Doctor Service
The furthest corner. The finest care.

AirDoctor



From the Chairman & CEO >



LORETTA REYNOLDS
Chairman

JOHN LYNCH
Chief Executive Officer

THE YEAR got off to an exciting start with the announcement that we will open a new base in Darwin in September this year – almost a year after the opening of the RFDS Darwin Tourist Facility.

It's an important step for RFDS Central Operations as it allows us to consolidate our presence in the Northern Territory and be available as an alternative provider to the Government for contract charter work (transporting specialist and health service providers to communities) and low acuity patient movements which sit outside the current aeromedical contract in the Top End (*read more on page 5*).

We are pleased to report that our Darwin Tourist Facility continues to go from strength to strength. The facility, which features the Bombing of Darwin Harbour and the history of RFDS exhibitions with virtual reality and other interactive displays, has become one of Darwin's top tourist attractions.

The NT Government's Tourism NT is so impressed with our Darwin and Alice Springs tourist facilities that it featured both in its NT Tourism roadshow pitch to international tourism fairs in Berlin and Los Angeles in March this year.

The year has also been tempered with the sad news of the passing of one of our inaugural Doctors in Central Operations, Dr Bob Cooter AM. Dr Cooter served the RFDS and the people of

rural and remote SA for almost 50 years, and we have dedicated the centre spread (pages 8-9) of this *AirDoctor* to his enormous contribution.

There have been important developments in primary health care delivery from our Port Augusta Base with the appointment of specialist nurses – Chronic Disease Coordinator, Mandy Smallacombe and Community Health Nurse/Midwife, Caitlyn Keller – who commenced regular clinic flights in February.

We are also pleased to welcome the services of McGrath Foundation Breast Care Nurse, Judith Finlay, who is working part-time for RFDS from our Port Augusta Base where she provides support and education for patients in rural and remote SA.

Judith is only the second McGrath Breast Care Nurse to be provided to RFDS.

In December, our Port Augusta Primary Health Care Service attained Australian General Practice Accreditation Ltd (AGPAL) accreditation and, with the introduction of digital patient record-keeping, our health services are able to offer our rural and remote patients the same standard and quality of practice as in metropolitan areas.

It has been a year since we added the management and service provision of the Marla and Andamooka clinics to our existing Marree service. We are pleased to report that RFDS has enhanced staff safety standards by making each clinic a dual Remote Area Nurse (RAN) operation and introducing three new state-of-the-art 4WD custom-built ambulances equipped with the latest communications and GPS tracking equipment.

We introduced safety monitoring of our staff when leaving the clinic (always in pairs accessing volunteers where necessary) through a log-in system with our 24/7 Operations Communications Centre in Port Augusta and the provision of satellite telephones.

This applies to all RFDS staff travelling and providing services remotely.

RFDS Port Augusta has also been proud to be part of the Meningococcal B Project being run

by the Women's and Children's Hospital and the University of Adelaide to vaccinate teenagers against the deadly virus (*read more on page 4*).

The delivery in July this year of the fourth of our four replacement Pilatus PC-12 aircraft over the past two financial years, and all with the support of the community and the Commonwealth Government, is a very exciting occasion for us.

The aircraft being received on June 30 this year is in fact the 1,500th PC-12 manufactured by Pilatus and, as we were their launch customer, this is a significant milestone for both organisations and our strong partnership.

In closing this report, we can both advise we are looking forward to getting sand in our toes and attending our signature fundraising event the 'Wings for Life' Gala Ball – *the BAREFOOT Beach Ball* on Friday 12 May. Hope to see many of you there!

LORETTA REYNOLDS
Chairman

JOHN LYNCH
Chief Executive Officer

AirDoctor is the official magazine of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia Central Operations.

Street Address: 1 Tower Road
Adelaide Airport SA 5950

Postal Address: PO Box 381
Marleston SA 5033

Phone: 08 8238 3333

Email: enquiries@flyingdoctor.net

Fax: 08 8238 3395

flyingdoctor.org.au/sant

facebook.com/royalflyingdoctorservice

@RoyalFlyingDoc

OUR COVER: RFDS Alice Springs Base aeromedical retrieval of young patient in Central Australia. (Image: Dr Tom Huang)

Tiny object nearly takes toddler's life >



Belinda Chinnery with Jett as a seven-year-old (Image: Skai Skorup-Matthews).

EVERY DAY the RFDS lands at Whyalla Airport to provide urgent aeromedical care to someone seriously sick or injured.

Something that Whyalla resident Belinda Chinnery knows only too well.

All mothers know that toddlers are busy little people.

Belinda was enjoying an ordinary day with her toddler Jett when an innocent moment caused a sudden alarm.

Belinda was doing the laundry when young Jett walked in with a small object in his hand.

It was small, shiny and round.

"He is the sort of kid who puts everything in his mouth, so I immediately followed him to check what he was holding and then he started coughing," Belinda, a nurse at Whyalla Hospital, recalls.

"I thought maybe it was a coin and I patted his back to try to get it out so he wasn't gagging," she says.

"I was doing everything I knew that I had to do, but then I thought: 'I need to get him to hospital'".

I was doing everything I knew that I had to do, but then I thought: 'I need to get him to hospital'.

Belinda Chinnery

On arrival at Whyalla Hospital, an X-ray was performed, revealing a small button battery lodged in little Jett's throat.

Button batteries found in remote controls and other household electronic devices are a severe risk for young children.

While most other swallowed foreign objects will pass through the gastrointestinal tract without causing any concerns, button batteries, depending on their size, have a tendency to lodge in the oesophagus.

Here, saliva immediately triggers an electrical

current, causing a chemical reaction that can severely burn through the oesophagus in as little as one to two hours.

If the ingestion is not recognised, the battery can erode through into vital organs, causing catastrophic damage and sometimes death.

An endoscopy was performed in Whyalla to try to retrieve the button, but the procedure was unsuccessful.

It was then determined that Jett needed urgent specialist treatment at the Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH) in Adelaide.

The RFDS was alerted, and an aircraft soon left Whyalla with a RFDS Flight Nurse providing little Jett with crucial care in the air.

The 385-kilometre drive from Whyalla to Adelaide takes more than four hours, but the RFDS aircraft covers this ground in just 55 minutes.

On arrival at WCH, there was great relief when a further endoscopy procedure finally removed the battery, and Jett made a complete recovery.

"We were lucky, very lucky, because the battery had started to erode," Belinda says.

RFDS links 'Men B' vaccine to bush teens >



RFDS Practice Manager Cheryl Boles, Community Health Nurse Caitlyn Keller and Pilot Esther Velstra loading the aircraft with the vaccine at Port Augusta Base.

THE RFDS is taking part in a landmark project to build herd immunity among teenagers by vaccinating them against deadly Meningococcal B disease.

The project is being conducted in South Australia only by the Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH) and the University of Adelaide in a bid to have the vaccination added to the national immunisation schedule.

The RFDS was approached to co-deliver because it is the regular provider of primary health care services, and in some cases the sole provider, to isolated SA communities including Marla, Mintabie, Oak Valley, Yalata, Oodnadatta and Marree.

RFDS Community Health Nurse, Caitlyn Keller, underwent training in February as part of the project to conduct throat swabs and administer the vaccine to teenagers in remote communities, many of them Indigenous.

"These are the children that are the most fragile and who have become quite unwell with Meningococcal B – for them it's a quick disease process so having access to the vaccine is crucial," Caitlyn says.

Our mission is to provide the same healthcare that people receive in the metropolitan areas.

Cheryl Boles

"We're hoping that the project will show that herd immunity improves in the adolescent population; if that's proven, it will go onto the national immunisation schedule."

Under the project, up to 60,000 SA teenagers will be given the Meningococcal B vaccine for free.

RFDS Port Augusta Base Primary Health Care Clinic Practice Manager, Cheryl Boles, said it was important that small, isolated communities were included in the project.

"Part of the trial was that every young adolescent in the state would be offered this service, and

because the numbers are small sometimes these communities get left out of these opportunities," Ms Boles says.

"Our mission is to provide the same healthcare that people receive in the metropolitan areas."

SA has the country's highest rates of Meningococcal B, and as part of the trial throat swabs will be taken to examine how the bacteria spreads.

"We'd fly to Mintabie, do the swabs, give the immunisations, and have that swab back in a laboratory in Port Augusta with a 12-hour turnaround," Ms Boles says.

The WCH's Professor Helen Marshall told the ABC that Aboriginal Australians were at greater risk of catching meningococcal disease, although it was not clear why.

"It could be overcrowding or reduced access to medical services to get a diagnosis, it could also be risk factors like smoking," she said.

"It's very exciting to have the RFDS so involved, otherwise it would be quite difficult to involve communities in remote settlements."



RFDS 'lands' new Darwin base >

NT Airports CEO Ian Kew, Ahrens Building Estimator, Sean Delaney, RFDS Central Operations CEO John Lynch and NT Health Minister Natasha Fyles MP.

DARWIN IS SET to become the home of the 25th aeromedical base for the RFDS following announcement of construction of the \$4 million purpose-built facility on a greenfields site at Darwin International Airport (DIA).

Set for completion in September, the RFDS Darwin Base will enable the RFDS to fulfil its strategic goal of providing the finest care through the entire north-south corridor of South Australia and the Northern Territory.

“Every three hours, somewhere in the Territory, the Flying Doctor is assisting someone who is in need of an emergency medical evacuation,” says John Lynch, CEO of RFDS Central Operations.

“Our new Darwin aeromedical facility will enable the RFDS to deliver enhanced care and comfort for our patients heading into Darwin,” Mr Lynch says.

The RFDS has been evacuating patients from Central Australia and the Kimberley region of Western Australia to Royal Darwin Hospital for almost 80 years, using a combination of hangar sub-lease and shared access arrangements with general aviation providers at Darwin Airport.

Last year the RFDS transported more than 2,600 Territorians alone – equivalent to seven patients per day in the Northern Territory.

The RFDS Darwin Base follows a 15-year lease agreement between DIA and RFDS Central Operations which will see DIA construct the \$4 million facility to RFDS design specifications.



Every three hours, somewhere in the NT, the Flying Doctor is assisting someone who is in need of an evacuation.



John Lynch

“The modern facility will create a streamlined patient transfer process, as well as provide a modern and safe workplace for Darwin staff, guests and our NT Health service-delivery partners,” Mr Lynch says.

“It will also offer the NT Government additional clinic charter capacity and aeromedical capacity in the Top End – and a cost-effective option for the repatriation of low acuity patients from Royal Darwin Hospital to hospitals such as Katherine and Gove.”

Local design and construction company Ahrens has been awarded the contract for the construction of the RFDS Darwin Base.

The new Darwin Base follows \$18 million of investment by the RFDS in enhanced health services and tourism attractions in the NT over the past five years, including the RFDS Darwin Tourist Facility which opened last July and is one of the NT’s top tourist attractions.

The aviation section of the new facility will include a modern engineering workshop and store with the capacity to hangar up to four RFDS aircraft – including one long-haul aeromedical jet – as well as parking for up to six aircraft on the tarmac apron.

Features of the medical and patient transfer facility include time-critical design factors and private patient management bays, with a separate waiting area/lounge for charter guests such as NT Health clinicians delivering remote clinics.

Lucky escape for drag racer >



Howard Browne on his drag bike.

HOWARD BROWNE was in so much pain from multiple broken bones he asked medical staff not to move him but leave him to move himself so he could stop when the pain was too much. Howard, 54, of Adelaide, came off his drag bike in a spectacular fashion during a drag bike racing finals in Whyalla.

As he tells it, this was the first drag bike race meeting where he was without his regular crew chief, his son Anthony, who had remained in Adelaide to attend his girlfriend's 21st birthday.

But Howard had been keeping touch, texting his son from his mobile phone his progress as he went through the minor races, qualifying for the final.

In the final, Howard was pipped at the post by two thousandths of a second but what happened next seemed to last much longer.

Once past the finish line and travelling at a speed close to 200 kilometres per hour, Howard began his usual braking sequence to reduce his speed and come to a halt safely.

"But when I went for the brakes my front tyre exploded and all I remember was the handlebars

☞ All I remember was the handlebars going into a full lock, it bucked me and I was launched. ☞

Howard Browne

going into a full lock, it bucked me and I was launched," Howard says.

"That's the last thing I remember until I was in the ambulance. Apparently, I bounced 140 metres down the track. The bloke I was racing against was the first person who got to me, he thought I was dead.

"But apparently, I came to, tried to sit up and all I wanted to know was did I win and was my bike all right?"

In serious pain, he was put into a neck brace and taken to Whyalla Hospital.

Howard had broken all of his ribs on his left side, received a punctured lung, a broken collarbone and multiple fractures in his right hand.

Luckily, hospital scans found no serious neck or spine damage but because of the nature of his fractures it was decided to airlift him to the Royal Adelaide Hospital and the RFDS was alerted.

Howard was full of praise for the Whyalla Hospital staff, particularly the trauma doctor and the nurses and then the RFDS aeromedical staff for their care and attention.

"I'm not a keen flyer at the best of times, but I had ample pain relief and was comfortable during the flight," he says.

He was flown out of Whyalla by RFDS at 2:30 in the morning.

It was more than a year after his nearly catastrophic accident that Howard thought he'd have another go. He rebuilt his damaged bike and entered the Whyalla races and won the meeting.

"It was an amazing feeling just making it to the final. My son was with me this time; I wasn't sure if I'd won but everyone in the crowd stood up and was clapping," he says.

This was his final race.

"I don't need to get back on that drag bike again. I did what I needed to do," Howard says.

Seeds for Flynn's scheme sown 100 years ago >

JULY WILL MARK the centenary of the death of a little-known outback stockman which attracted national headlines and proved the impetus for Reverend John Flynn's vision for an outback aeromedical service.

Kimberley stockman Jimmy Darcy suffered massive internal injuries on 29 July 1917 when his horse fell in a cattle stampede. An 80-kilometre ride on a dray over a rough track took him to the nearest settlement of Halls Creek in the far north of Western Australia.

Jimmy Darcy needed immediate lifesaving surgery and with the nearest doctor thousands of kilometres away, Halls Creek postmaster Fred Tuckett had to perform emergency surgery with the help of morse code, a penknife and some morphine.

For days, newspaper readers around Australia were gripped by the story of the young stockman's desperate struggle for life.

It was 2800km from Halls Creek where a doctor in Perth, Dr Joe Holland, instructed Tuckett via morse code how to carry out the surgery on Jimmy Darcy.

Tuckett is afraid he'll make a mistake – that he'll kill the injured man – but Dr Holland tells him if he doesn't act now Darcy will die anyway.

Using his pocketknife, Tuckett makes an incision



Reverend John Flynn.

Jimmy Darcy's headstone.

If you start something worthwhile, nothing can stop it.

Reverend John Flynn

above the pubic bone as the stockman's brothers try to ease his agony and shoo the flies away from the blood. Tuckett works for hours, cutting and stitching, stopping every few minutes to check the doctor's telegrams.

The operation on Darcy's ruptured bladder is a success but the 29-year-old stockman is weak and now suffering from malaria.

Dr Holland makes a mercy dash from Perth. He boards a cattle ship that takes an agonising week to reach Derby and he then spends six days in a Model T Ford held together by leather straps, bumping and thumping his way across the desert to save the stockman's life.

Aborigines help push his car across river beds and up sandy banks and he endures punctures, radiator leaks and engine stutters.

At one point he has to use the rubber tubing from his stethoscope to siphon the last drops of petrol from a can. The car finally conks out 40km from Halls Creek.

Dr Holland walks for two hours to a nearby cattle station and then rides through the night to reach the town at daybreak. Jimmy Darcy has died a few hours earlier.

That same year Lieutenant Clifford Peel, a young Victorian medical student and pilot shipping out to the war in France, wrote to Flynn suggesting that aviation could transform the Outback.

Rev John Flynn was deeply affected by Darcy's death and wanted to provide a 'mantle of safety' for people living, working and travelling in the outback.

Peel was shot down and killed the following year, unaware that he had planted a seed that would save thousands of lives.

It took a decade of hard work for Flynn's prayers to take flight but on 2 November 1927, the Brisbane Courier reported that a "try out" of an aerial medical service was starting in Queensland's "lonely places" and that Flynn and Alfred Traeger, who was working on a pedal-powered wireless, were in western Queensland making arrangements.

On 17 May 1928 – more than a decade after Jimmy Darcy's death – pilot Arthur Affleck finally took off from Cloncurry for Julia Creek in Flynn's first flying ambulance, leased from the new Longreach-based bush airline, QANTAS.

Story courtesy of Grantlee Kieza, The Courier-Mail



Dr Robert Benjamin Cooter AM: 2 April 1927 – 30 March 2017 >

Our Inaugural Doctors, Dr Bob Cooter AM, Dr John Mickan AM and Dr John Thompson OAM at the Port Augusta Base opening in 2007.

A WORLD-FIRST discovery and years of dedication to rural health, in particular, to the RFDS, clearly defined the late Dr Robert Cooter AM as a pathfinder in rural medicine and service provision to remote communities throughout South Australia.

Dr Cooter graduated with a medical degree (MBBS) from the University of Adelaide in 1952 and within a few years headed north with his wife Marie, a midwife, and one daughter to become a rural General Practitioner.

In 1955, Dr Cooter joined the Port Augusta General Practice – the only one in town – with Dr John Thompson and Dr John Mickan, and

later Dr John Bampton, the same year the RFDS established its Port Augusta Base.

The three became the RFDS Central Operations' "inaugural doctors", and agreed to provide medical services to remote communities at their practice's expense on a rotating on-call basis.

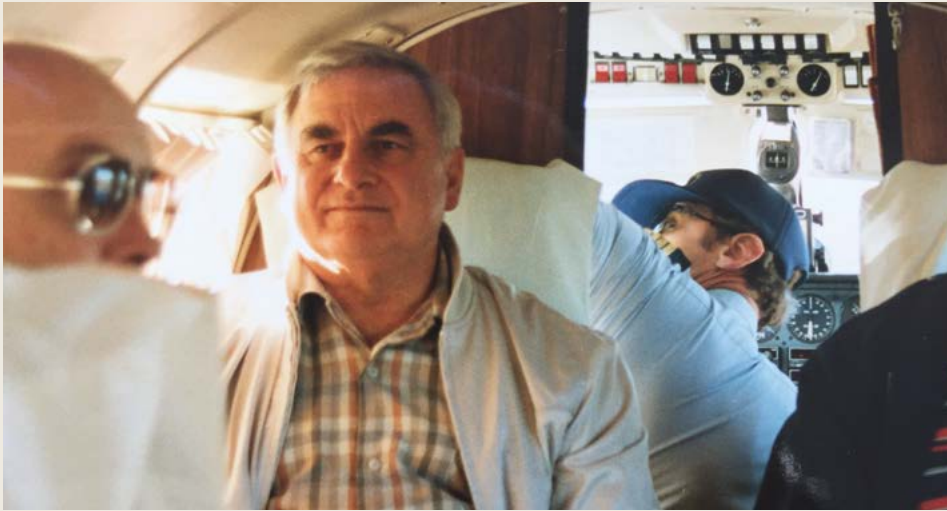
They also provided medical services to the 82-bed Port Augusta Hospital and performed a range of surgery, obstetrics and gynaecological services in addition to the range of work performed for the RFDS.

As there were no procedural specialists in Port Augusta, the doctors did all the minor and major

emergency surgery (1,000 operations a year) and averaged 350 deliveries a year.

When new techniques became available, or they felt that there was a gap in their knowledge, they would dispatch one of the partners to Adelaide to learn how to do them and he would return and teach the others.

Dr Cooter spent 17 years providing medical services to the RFDS in Port Augusta from on-call emergency phone and radio consultations, monthly fly-in two-day health clinics to Andamooka, Oodnadatta and Marree, and emergency flights to remote stations and other locations.



Dr Bob Cooter AM on a RFDS flight in the 1980s.

By the time the Cooter family left Port Augusta they had five daughters, three of them in boarding school in Adelaide.

Robert Benjamin Cooter was born in a midwife's home at Mile End, South Australia, on 2 April 1927, the youngest of four, with one brother and two sisters.

His mother, Ivy, who was of Cornish background, had been brought up on the land at Moonta on the Yorke Peninsula. His father John and four uncles were butchers. Some of his medical friends joked that this association with butchery must have influenced his decision to study medicine.

Bob's early schooling was at Thebarton Primary School and then at Adelaide High School. He obtained a state government bursary which enabled him to enter the medical school at the University of Adelaide. There he received a sports blue for rowing and a reputation for singing and sleeping.

Dr Cooter said of his time working for the RFDS that the doctors worked as volunteers and the patients paid nothing.

"We felt that it was justified because of their position on the earth, being so remote and we felt we had to give them a service, whether we got money for it or not, didn't matter," Dr Cooter said in an interview in 2013.

"We felt that people up there deserved this sort of treatment."

To know him is an honour
 To call him friend a privilege
 Good friends light candles
 whenever they're around
 Old friends keep them burning
 They never let you down
 Thank you old friend, you will be
 missed and always remembered.

John Lynch

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Dr Cooter and his colleague Dr Mickan was their work which led to the confirmation of the discovery of the cause of a rare and fatal amoebic meningitis.

The disease had resulted in the deaths of 20 children and young adults in Port Augusta (15 victims), Port Pirie (three) and Kadina (two).

In 1966, Dr Cooter performed a lumbar puncture on a 10-year-old boy at Port Augusta; following review of the boy's spinal fluid under a microscope, Dr Cooter and his partner Dr John Mickan identified a live amoeba for the first time.

Based on their research of environmental and epidemiological factors, and case histories of victims, Dr Cooter and Dr Mickan strongly suspected that the source of the amoeba was in the River Murray pipeline water.



Dr Bob Cooter and daughter Liz May.

This suspicion was later confirmed.

Dr Cooter gave nearly 50 years of service to the RFDS; as a flying doctor in the Port Augusta general practice, then as a member of RFDS Central Operations Board 1979-2000 and later as Chairman from 1985 to 1988.

He also found time to provide advice to the Government on the need for highways to be able to double as landing strips for the RFDS when attending to the rail services or travellers as they explored our great nation.

Dr Cooter also chaired the RFDS' Health Advisory Committee and was made a Life Member of RFDS Central Operations in 2000. He was the inaugural Life Member of the Rural Doctors' Association of South Australia, recognised by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) for his pioneering work on Aboriginal health, on rural medical training, and for establishing a rural locum service.

He was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to the RFDS and to rural medicine and was made a Distinguished Alumni by the University of Adelaide.

Dr Cooter, Dr Mickan and Dr Thompson were honoured in 2010 with a dedication to "Our Inaugural Doctors" placed on a RFDS Pilatus PC-12.

Dr Cooter is survived by four daughters and fourteen grandchildren.

 Crafted in Switzerland

PC-12 NG



 **PILATUS** 

THANK YOU FOR FLYING PILATUS

From outback strips to city airports, the Pilatus PC-12 has operated day and night for over twenty years to keep the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) in the air. As a future operator of the new PC-24, the RFDS is set to continue its tradition as a loyal and valuable member of the Pilatus family. We are all extremely proud to be associated with the RFDS and their provision of the finest care to the furthest corners with our aircraft – yesterday, today and in the future.

Pilatus Australia Pty Ltd · Phone +61 8 8238 1600 · www.pilatus-aircraft.com



Dr John Woodall and Nursing Director Vikki Denny inspect the HFHO Ventilator.

Ventilation trial to enhance care for critical patients >

A NEW non-invasive technique for ventilating critically-ill patients which improves patient safety and comfort is set to be trialled by the RFDS for use in rural and remote locations.

Use of non-invasive High Flow Humidified Oxygen (HFHO) has already been trialled successfully for the support of post-operative patients in major hospitals and intensive care settings, but not yet evaluated in aeromedical or remote medical settings.

RFDS Central Operations Chief Medical Officer, Dr John Woodall, said the use of HFHO could revolutionise how the RFDS and others save lives in rural and remote Australia.

"Its efficacy in the aeromedical environment, and in rural and remote settings, has yet to be established," Dr Woodall says.

"The RFDS will purchase the medical equipment and conduct the clinical trial of HFHO delivered via nasal cannula."

The trial will include RFDS aeromedical bases and remote clinics in South and Central Australia, with patient data evaluated and presented by the RFDS for peer review and

publication in medical journals, and presentation to aeromedical conferences.

"Patients with severe respiratory failure cannot adequately breathe and, conventionally, require placement of a breathing tube in their trachea, known as endotracheal intubation," Dr Woodall says.

"This invasive procedure is a vital component of life support and should be performed by a highly skilled critical care clinician or retrieval doctor."

Dr Woodall said clinical studies had shown that non-invasive ventilation of patients using HFHO can be readily administered by a Registered Nurse (RN) or Paramedic.

Once the clinical benefits of HFHO via nasal cannula outside of the established hospital environments have been verified, Dr Woodall said this would enhance the skills of RFDS RNs in caring for patients in aeromedical and remote clinical settings.

"The RFDS aims to be an innovator and a leader in aeromedicine in rural and remote Australia," Dr Woodall says.

RFDS remains most reputable charity >

TRUST IN Australian charities is at its highest level in years with the RFDS named Australia's most trusted charity for the sixth year in a row in the 2016 Charity Reputation Index.

Conducted by leading research consultants, AMR, the annual AMR Charity Reputation Index measures the overall reputation of Australia's leading charities, as well as ranks them in individual measurements of Services, Innovation, Workplace, Citizenship, Governance, Leadership and Cost Management.

The RFDS was not only ranked first for the sixth year running, but it was ranked first across all the seven individual measurements. Furthermore, it is the first time a charity has ranked first across all seven dimensions.

In the ranking, the RFDS scored 96.9 out of a possible 100 points.

"We could never achieve this degree of public perception without the dedication and professionalism of our people," says John Lynch, CEO of RFDS Central Operations.

"This also includes our corporate and community partners, volunteers and Auxiliary/Support Groups who advocate so positively and actively on behalf of the RFDS. Congratulations to you all," he says.



Australia Day honour >

A LONG-SERVING supporter of RFDS Central Operations, Treasurer and Board Member, Paul Prestwich (pictured), was congratulated on receiving an Order of Australia Medal on Australia Day.

Paul Prestwich OAM received his honour for service to the community of South Australia including service to RFDS Central Operations where Paul has served as Treasurer since 1996 and as a Board member since 1995.

Paul has also chaired the Audit and Finance Committee since 1996, and is currently Chair of the Safety, Quality and Risk Management Committee.

In another sign of Paul's dedication to community service he achieved another milestone earlier this year and was honoured by the Australian Red Cross Blood Service for clocking up 40 years as a donor.

According to the Red Cross, Paul has racked up nearly 400 mostly plasma donations over that time and has saved more than 1150 lives in a simple action that has become, for him, a way of life.



David and Lou Hills after David chaired his final Board meeting in October 2016.

Long-serving Chairman bows out after decade >

TOWARDS THE END of 2016, RFDS Central Operations' Board paid tribute to long-serving Chairman, David Hills, who stepped down from the role after 10 years.

Mr Hills has been involved with RFDS since 2001 when he chaired the Major Gift Campaign for three years, raising more than \$3 million.

Mr Hills' involvement with RFDS Central Operations was formalised when he was appointed to the Board, bringing with him a wealth of experience gained as Managing Director of Elders Limited and as chairman at Australian Agricultural Co. and then Rural Solutions.

Born in Broken Hill, Mr Hills also brought to the Board a comprehensive understanding of the role of the RFDS and of the importance of our rural communities.

John Lynch, CEO of RFDS Central Operations, paid tribute to Mr Hills nominating among his achievements the delivery of mental health services by RFDS in Central Australia, a 10-year Healthy Living Program in rural and remote South Australia and securing the 10-year Inter-Hospital Transfer (IHT) contract with the SA Government.

"David has also played a key role on behalf of Central Operations in shaping the RFDS Federation agenda, both in structure and policy," Mr Lynch says.

"David's personal contribution to the RFDS has been one of selfless commitment of time, of spirit and philanthropy which on many occasions has been carried out with anonymity."

Mr Hills was succeeded in the role in October 2016 by Deputy Chairman Loretta Reynolds.



RFDS Community Health Nurse, Caitlyn Keller, checks a patient's blood pressure.



McGrath Breast Care Nurse Judith Finlay shows how to check for breast lumps.

Breast Care Nurse joins RFDS team >

RFDS SPECIALIST health nurses were on demand during a health 'pit stop' as part of the Mount Barry Station Field Day, near Oodnadatta in outback SA, in March.

The well-attended pit stop provided health screening, education and immunisations for one day of the two-day agricultural field day run by Natural Resources SA Arid Lands.

It featured for the first time, RFDS McGrath Foundation Breast Care Nurse, Judith Finlay, who is working with RFDS Port Augusta Base fly-in clinics one week a month to provide support for isolated people affected by cancer, particularly breast cancer.

The field day also featured an RFDS doctor and two new specialist nurses, Chronic Disease Coordinator Mandy Smallacombe and Community Health Nurse and Midwife Caitlyn Keller, who began working with RFDS Port Augusta Base in January.

Judith, in particular, was excited to take part in her first field day with RFDS.

"I am so privileged to be working for two of

“A lot of my work is supporting families psychologically through their breast cancer experience.”

Judith Finlay

the best known charitable organisations within Australia that have got such a great name,” Judith says.

“Working with the RFDS will enable me to come to these isolated communities and get to know people, teach people about breast awareness and give them some support if somebody gets a diagnosis of breast cancer.”

Judith's position is supported by the McGrath Foundation and is the only other breast care nurse the Foundation provides to the RFDS, with the other located at RFDS Broken Hill Base.

The RFDS health pit stop was located at the

school building at Mt Barry which allowed Judith to introduce herself and her work to locals.

“A lot of my work is supporting families psychologically, through their breast cancer experience including organising appointments with specialists in Adelaide,” Judith says.

“I also explain to them what's going to go on when they do get a diagnosis of breast cancer and follow up by checking on them when they come of hospital.”

The new specialist nurses add to the services offered at the RFDS Port Augusta Base Primary Health Care Service, fly-in clinics to remote locations in SA including the Birdsville Track, North West Pastoral and Gawler Ranges, and at RFDS Health Services in Marla, Andamooka and Marree.

“We are very proud to be providing these additional services to people living in some of the remotest parts of SA, services that are readily available to city dwellers but rarely if not at all for those in the bush,” RFDS Central Operations Chief Operating Officer, Tony Vaughan says.



RFDS Fundraising Manager Anthea Rice receives the latest donation from Port Lincoln Auxiliary members: John Dinham, Bill Whitbread, John Nippres and Tunarama Ambassador Miss Elders, Heather Channon.

Pt Lincoln 'lands' \$100,000 >

THE EYRE PENINSULA community has come out in force in support of the RFDS with an almighty \$100,000 fundraising effort over the past year.

RFDS Port Lincoln Auxiliary President, Bill Whitbread, said the RFDS lands on the Eyre Peninsula twice a day to connect critically-ill patients with specialist care in Adelaide's major hospitals.

"Just over half of our latest \$50,000 donation was raised by Tunarama Ambassador Miss Elders, Heather Channon, which was a fantastic effort and greatly appreciated by the RFDS," Mr Whitbread says.

"Funds were also raised by the Auxiliary volunteers through barbecues, bingo and raffle ticket sales, our new donut van, as well as country and western dances, hire of the RFDS merry-go-round, trading tables, and donations to our annual Badge Day."

Bill also paid tribute to the "numerous" Eyre Peninsula businesses who support the RFDS with collection tins on their premises.

"The RFDS Port Lincoln Auxiliary is extremely grateful for the very generous support that we receive from the wider Eyre Peninsula community, particularly in the towns of Coffin Bay, Elliston, Port Kenny, Streaky Bay, Wudinna, Lock, Cummins, Tumbly Bay and Cleve."

Support from other side of the world >

THE RFDS GERMAN Support Group, or *flydoc australia e.v. (Inc)*, has been a regular supporter of the RFDS delivering donations to individual bases across Australia – the latest a \$7,000 donation in Alice Springs.

President of *flydoc australia* Dr Hans-Ullrich Henschel OAM, a paediatrician, said the group, based in Hamm in north-west Germany, has donated more than \$190,000 to the RFDS since 2003.

Dr Henschel, who frequently visits RFDS bases in Australia, is often asked why there is such strong support for the RFDS in a country so far away.

Inspired by the 1980s TV series *Flying Doctor* filmed at Coopers Crossing, Dr Henschel began fundraising for the RFDS.

"The medical service of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia is famous in Germany because of different TV shows and it is crucial for Australians living, working and travelling in the vast outback," Dr Henschel says.

"There is also an increasing number of German tourists visiting the remote parts of Australia and if they get sick or need help, then the Flying Doctor is there to give assistance."



RFDS Alice Springs Tourist Facility Manager Lesley Prince and NT General Manager Michael Toomey receive a \$7,000 donation from Hans and Rena Henschel.



Beach Energy's Stan Beavers, Della Loggie and Belinda Wong.

Beach staff run for RFDS >

BEACH ENERGY staff recognise that the RFDS could literally be a lifesaver for them or one of their workmates which is why 20 staff committed to complete in the Adelaide Corporate Triathlon and raise funds for the Flying Doctor.

The competitors rallied support for the triathlon team by collecting donations from their colleagues, family and friends, and Beach Energy supported the fundraising efforts by offering an Adelaide Zoo animal encounter prize for the three highest fundraisers.

All staff completed the course in February at West Lakes – a 300 metre swim, 9km bike ride and 3km run – with the women's team taking third place.

Beach Energy Senior Reservoir Engineer and competitor, Trevor Wadham, said everyone had a fantastic day out supporting each other to complete the challenge.

“The most satisfying part was a week later when I was able to present the RFDS with the fundraising cheque for \$5,467.30 – double last year's effort – and tour the new RFDS Adelaide Base where their amazing work is evident,” Trevor says.

“Beach Energy is proud to be a long-term supporter of the RFDS and our Triathlon team is already preparing for 2018 where we will be aiming to increase our participation and fundraising once again.”

John's close shave raises \$17,000 >

JOHN GIRKE knew he was onto something when he made the decision to shave the bushy “trademark” moustache he had treasured for 32 years.

Having been associated with fundraising for the RFDS for the past 15 years, John thought his moustache shave might get ‘a bit’ of support.

He was not wrong – using his company Access Capital's newsletter and children's Facebook accounts he managed to raise an amazing \$17,000 for the RFDS.

As John tells it, neither his wife of 24 years nor

his adult children (aged 19 and 20 years) had ever seen him without his moustache.

“I thought ‘why not?’ I can always grow it back!” John says.

Choosing the RFDS as the charity to support was not a difficult decision.

“We have family and friends living in remote areas throughout the whole of Australia who rely on their services,” John says.

“Access Capital have a very large rural client base, as well as mining companies, so it felt like the obvious charity to support.”



John Girke before and after his shave.



Simpson Desert riders yield \$34,840 >

THE INTREPID Simpson Desert Bike Challenge riders have once again traversed the hilliest – and toughest – route of the Simpson Desert in the SA outback and raised an incredible \$34,840 for the RFDS.

Riders in 2016 for the second time took the French Line which is the most direct through the desert but the most challenging because of the multiple sand dunes.

There were 25 riders with a convoy of up to 50 support vehicles who made it to Birdsville after five days of cycling over sand dunes all for a good cause.

Race organisers say they'll take the more traditional “Classic Route” which follows the Rig Road when the 2017 Simpson Desert Bike Challenge takes place from 26 to 30 September.

Further information visit desertchallenge.org



Leave a life-saving legacy

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) conducts 100 aeromedical flights across Australia every day – more than 20 of these in South and Central Australia. But without bequests and donations, we can't keep our 'flying intensive care units' in the sky.

Please remember the RFDS in your will.

To receive your complimentary copy of our special bequest booklet, call Ross Curtis on **(08) 8238 3333** or email **ross.curtis@flyingdoctor.net**



Royal Flying Doctor Service

The furthest corner. The finest care.