

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Friday, 9 December 2016

### **New 4WD Ambulances bound for SA Outback clinics**

Three new custom-built 4WD ambulances are being put into service by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to enhance its on-the-ground emergency care and capability at its three remote health clinics in outback South Australia.

The converted Toyota Troop Carriers, painted in red/blue livery matching the RFDS' aeromedical aircraft, have improved safety features for remote operations and equipment interchangeable with SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) road ambulances and RFDS aircraft.

The 4WD emergency ambulances will be operational at the RFDS-operated Health Services in Marree, Andamooka and Marla by Christmas.

RFDS Central Operations Chief Operating Officer, Tony Vaughan, said the modern ambulances were a significant investment by the RFDS into patient comfort and care, and in the safety of RFDS Remote Area Nurses (RAN) based at its outback health clinics.

"In addition to the modern medical fitout, these ambulances are fitted with the latest GPS tracking locators, communications equipment and safety features which add to the protection of staff and patients," Mr Vaughan says.

At a cost of \$140,000 each, funded by donations from the community, the emergency ambulances were medically-equipped to RFDS specification by Mader International in Tasmania, including an additional side door to allow easy access to care for patients.

Other features include spotlights, bull bar, winch, LED emergency lights and siren, dual diesel fuel tanks and dual batteries. Additional technical and safety features include:

- UHF and HF radios
- GRN radio – same as SAAS
- satellite phones which can be carried independently away from the vehicle
- two personal EPIRB emergency locator beacons.

SA Health Minister Jack Snelling congratulated RFDS Central Operations on its continued leadership and investment in the delivery of contemporary and quality services for people living and working in outback communities.

"The new 4WD ambulances will add to the capacity for the RFDS to provide emergency services to outback residents while providing RANs with the security of state-of-the-art safety and communications equipment," Mr Snelling says.

“The RFDS is a key partner in our State’s best practice model for emergency retrieval and inter-hospital patient transfer services that delivers the right people with the right skill-set to the right patients at the right time.

“We look forward to a further strengthening of that partnership with the RFDS’ delivery of emergency and primary health care to rural and remote South Australians.”

Mr Vaughan said there were plans to issue RFDS RANs at the remote health clinics with personal GPS monitors they can carry with them at all times while working.

Each RFDS Health Service is staffed by two RANs and provides primary health care, ambulance service, home visits and hosts RFDS fly-in GP and primary health care clinic visits.

“Our RANs are required to log all callouts with our Operational Communications Centre (OCC) at our Port Augusta Base and to take a fellow staff member or community member with them on late night or remote callouts,” Mr Vaughan says.

“This new equipment in addition to the ambulances will ensure our RANs can be remain in touch with OCC and be safely monitored as to their whereabouts if they are on a remote callout.”

RFDS Central Operations took over the operation of the Marla and Andamooka Health Services from Frontier Services at the beginning of 2016 and operate the clinics on behalf of Country Health SA.

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