



Royal Flying Doctor Service  
SOUTH EASTERN SECTION

# Year in review

2021/22





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# Our Mission, Values and Strategic Approach

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## **OUR MISSION**

Improved access supporting better health outcomes to remote, rural, and regional communities.

## **OUR STATEMENT**

The furthest corner. The finest care.

## **OUR STRATEGY**

Community, Healthcare, Service, Funding, People and Stakeholders.

## **OUR VALUES**

Reliability, Trust, Care and Safety.

# A message from the President and CEO

For the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section), 2021/22 was a year of offering new services, visiting new regions, and facing new challenges head-on. With our dedicated supporters by our side we were able to continue delivering high quality care to our communities.

For the third consecutive year, managing the significant impact of COVID-19 has been a major priority for us. Providing screening and testing, transporting COVID-19 positive patients, and the critical roll-out of the primary vaccination and boosters, which was an added focus on service delivery through the pandemic, defined 2021/22.

Our attention to providing primary healthcare and emergency retrieval throughout remained undiminished. In fact, many of our services returned to full scale after moving to telehealth or being temporarily suspended during the first two years of the pandemic.

The resources required to provide COVID-19 vaccinations quickly and responsibly to our isolated communities and assist with the wider rollout saw us expand our workforce and visit locations outside our traditional service footprint.

This was only possible through the hard work and dedication of our staff and the steadfast cooperation of our service partners and recipient communities.

## PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH A PANDEMIC

While it has been constantly mentioned over the past three years, there is no doubt that COVID-19 had a major impact on our organisation during 2021/22. We started the year operating many testing sites and transporting COVID-19 positive patients and by agreement with the Federal Government, we began a process that saw us deliver around 32,000 vaccinations in a few short months. This was an incredible outcome for our small, dedicated teams and a testament to our ability to deliver when we are needed most. The program demanded an agility and responsiveness of our workforce under very trying circumstances — the likes of which has never been seen before.

The vaccination rollout involved the deployment of multiple teams across the state, administering vaccines through our traditional clinics in our communities as well as visiting new regions such as the New England, North West Plains and South Coast. Clinics varied in size, from a handful of people on a remote property, to hundreds a day over consecutive days at Gunnedah, Tamworth and Narrabri.

Memorably, our vaccination teams worked to meet people wherever they were, vaccinating in shearing sheds, local pubs, and fields. These unusual settings allowed people who would have otherwise needed to travel several hours for each dose of the vaccine to receive it in their own community.

One of the most pleasing aspects of our vaccination efforts was the confidence our team imparted in the communities they visited by listening, educating, at times overcoming vaccine hesitancy, and to a diverse range of people.

We are proud of the part we played in the rollout. It was made possible through the dedication of our teams who worked long hours, in unique settings, with the discomfort and challenges of wearing Personal Protective Equipment to ensure we were able to provide protection to everyone who needed and wanted it.

## South Eastern Section board

Left to right: Professor David Lyle (President), Dr Saranne Cooke (Vice President), Mr Anthony (Tony) MacRae (Treasurer), David Ryan, Mrs Elaine (Ruth) Sandow, Mrs Sanchia Treloar, Mrs Joan Treweeke OAM.



Much of what we achieved has been made possible through strong working partnerships with other health service providers. Our relationships with Primary Health Networks, Local Health Districts, local Aboriginal Medical Services and many others made it possible to rapidly coordinate the vaccination and testing responses.

The impact of the pandemic reached further than our healthcare response. Our tourism teams at the Visitor Experience at Dubbo and the Visitor Centre at Broken Hill were impacted by the mandated lockdowns, with temporary closures followed by strict health orders. Our teams handled this with positivity and professionalism, assisting other areas of the organisation through valuable secondments supporting data entry among other much-needed roles.

Unsurprisingly, demand for our mental health services in the bush increased through the year as the pandemic, isolation and changes with work and home/life balance were exacerbated by the lingering impacts of one of the most devastating droughts on record. All have increased demand for our counselling services.

As dominant as the pandemic response has been for our operations, emergency retrievals for sick and injured people continued to be as much of a focus and an uncompromised core of our service delivery. In 2021/22, we conducted a total of 81 emergency retrievals, in line with retrievals number prior to the pandemic. To meet the rising demand for both retrieval and patient transfer services out of Broken Hill, a 12-hour daily shift with an additional plane, pilot and flight nurse commenced in March, complementing the existing 24-hour service.

## WORKING TO DELIVER HEALTHCARE AND SERVICES FOR ALL

Our strategic delivery of primary healthcare grew with expansion into new areas such as the north-west region of NSW. Clinics at Grawin, Burren Junction and Pilliga are now attended by a doctor and primary health nurse. Our Mobile Primary Health vehicles continued to deliver supporting care across the network with a continued focus on chronic disease management, thanks to a donation from a private foundation.

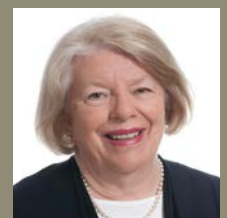
Dental health services were restricted by lockdowns but we continued to provide care when possible. As restrictions lifted, the team worked to rapidly prioritise the treatment of those who were unable to be seen during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Delivery of our services is now fortified by our Operations Centre which is operating efficiently and is the heart of our emergency retrieval and patient transport operations.

After 19 years of operation our contracted delivery service for the NSW Ambulance out of Mascot Airport came to an end on December 31, 2021. We thank the dedicated team of Pilots, Engineers, Ground Handling, Logistics and Base Management who worked on this contract.

We continue to grow our services out of Bankstown Airport, with two shifts per day added to the Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPT) capacity. This has resulted in more pilots and flight nurses being recruited to cover the shifts. Increasing the NEPT service allows us to carry more patients between Sydney and regional locations, ensuring people can get to and from hospital more quickly, reducing the stress of lengthy road transport.

The first of our aircraft to receive extensive upgrades to avionics and interior refurbishments, VH-XYJ, was also the first in the South Eastern Section fleet to receive a bright new national livery. This fresh look features a red underside representing the red earth of outback Australia, and a blue tail, representing the sky, as well as distinctive RFDS branding. Over time our entire fleet will receive the same livery upgrade.





# A message from the President and CEO

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## RECOGNITION

We would like to acknowledge Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC and her husband Mr Dennis Wilson, who continue to champion equitable access to healthcare for people who live, work and travel in the outback as our patrons.

This year we farewelled two members of our board who will be sadly missed. Outgoing President Alex Scamps and long-term Board Member Elizabeth Johnstone.

Alex has stepped down after five years to concentrate on a new employment opportunity. During his time as President, Alex oversaw a tremendous period of growth for the service in addition to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elizabeth announced her decision to retire from the board after 12 years, including 11 as the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

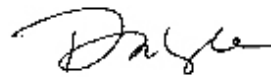
Elizabeth has overseen significant enhancements in our financial, risk and compliance environment and lead the introduction of the Service's investment strategy, resulting in an almost doubling of net assets during her time leading the Audit and Risk Committee.

Thank you to both Alex and Elizabeth for their important contributions. You will be missed and leave a lasting legacy at the Flying Doctor and within our communities.

We would like to recognise a significant achievement of another board member, Ruth Sandow. While Ruth is widely known as a passionate advocate for health access for rural and remote NSW, she is also a driving force for tourism for Milparinka and Corner Country.

It was her commitment to tourism that saw Ruth awarded the Dean Gorddard Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual at the NSW Tourism Awards in February 2022. Congratulations Ruth.

In reflecting on the achievements of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) in 2021/22, we remain grateful to our teams for their dedication and commitment and to our supporters for their generosity and encouragement. None of our accomplishments would be possible without your contributions. We are grateful for the loyal support you show.



Professor David Lyle  
President,  
Royal Flying Doctor Service  
(South Eastern Section)



Mr Greg Sam  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Royal Flying Doctor Service  
(South Eastern Section)





GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
SYDNEY

Message from

**Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC  
Governor of New South Wales  
and Mr Dennis Wilson**

The work of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern) Section this past year has been nothing short of extraordinary. Its services expanded to encompass the public health response to the pandemic, including the provision of COVID vaccinations, booster shots, children's primary vaccinations, and respiratory testing clinics.

From pubs and shearing sheds to outdoor pop-up clinics, and reaching into new regions, including Jervis Bay Territory and New England, clinical teams engaged wherever and whenever they could to ensure communities - including remote Indigenous communities - were able to receive vaccinations. That work was undertaken with full PPE being worn, adding to the onerous conditions under which they were operating. To further ensure community safety, each team member underwent daily COVID testing.

Of more than 75,000 vaccinations delivered by RFDS nationally, the teams of the South Eastern Section delivered some 30,000 vaccinations, the most of any of the RFDS sections around the country. Flights and vaccines were also provided to regional areas for other healthcare providers when other domestic air services were curtailed.

The isolation, disruption and anxiety caused by the pandemic created extra demands on the services of Mental Health teams, who stepped up to meet the challenge and who continue to offer vital support to regional communities. All of this was in addition to the 'regular' work of emergency retrieval, patient transportation and primary healthcare.

On the back of such an intense period of operations, it was wonderful to be able to convey our thanks to South Eastern Section pilots and representatives from operational teams at Government House last November.

To all at the magnificent Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) and to your generous supporters, as Patrons, we extend our heartfelt 'thank you'.

**Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC  
Governor of New South Wales**

**Mr Dennis Wilson**



# SNAPSHOT OF OUR YEAR

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**4,195,619**

kilometres flown



More than

**85,000**

occasions of care provided



**694**

COVID-19 respiratory and  
vaccination clinics delivered



**32,623**

COVID-19 vaccinations administered



**3,775**

dental patient visits



**3,441**

face-to-face Mental Health and Alcohol  
and Other Drugs consultations



**New primary health  
outreach clinics**

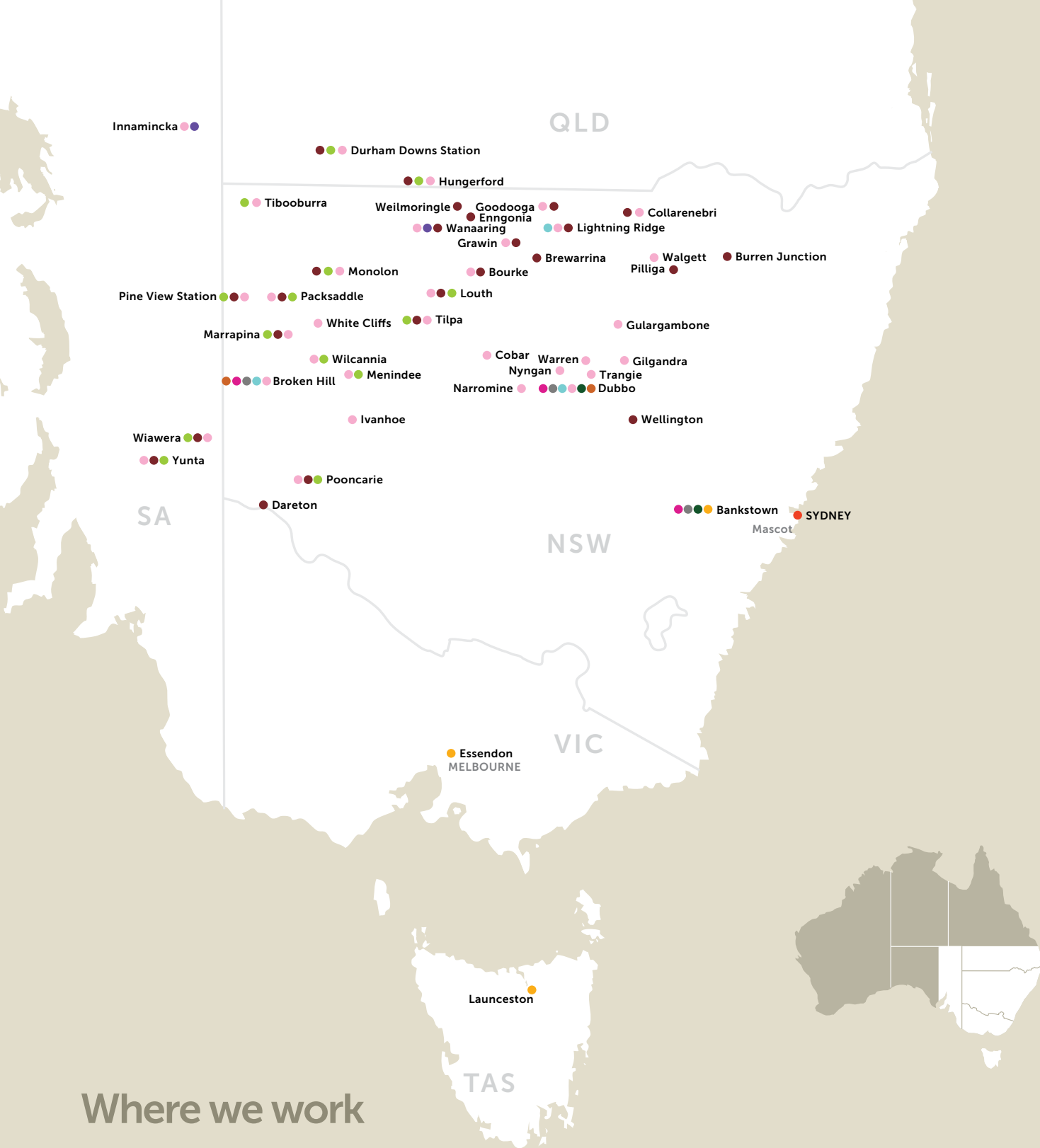
provided to communities in Western NSW



**New Older Persons**

Mental Health program introduced





## Where we work

This map provides a snapshot of the communities the South Eastern Section serves.

Across NSW and beyond, we deliver a range of health clinics and services, respond to medical emergencies and transfer patients with non-life-threatening conditions.

The South Eastern Section collaborates in service delivery with RFDS sections across state borders, in particular with RFDS in Queensland, Central Ops, Victoria and Tasmania.

## Key

- South Eastern Section Bases
- Wellbeing Places
- Corporate office
- Contracted Aeromedical Service Delivery
- Monthly remote Primary Health Clinics
- Remote Area Nurses on site
- Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs locations
- Regular dental team remote locations
- Rural Aerial Health Service (RAHS)
- Emergency retrieval service
- Inter-hospital transfers

# Supporting rural and remote communities through COVID-19

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104  
COVID-19  
respiratory clinics



590  
COVID-19  
vaccination clinics  
conducted



32,623  
COVID-19 vaccines  
administered



101  
Potential positive  
COVID-19 cases  
transported



42  
Staff members  
employed to support  
our COVID-19 services

In May 2021, the Federal Government announced a nation-wide partnership with the Royal Flying Doctor Service to roll out the COVID-19 vaccination program to rural and remote communities across Australia.

The South Eastern Section was trusted to provide people living and working in the Central West, Far West and North West of NSW with access to the vaccines. In addition, our highly-skilled team was asked to visit communities that we don't usually fly to in New England, the Upper Hunter and South Coast regions of NSW, to administer immunisations. We were later approved to deliver the fourth booster to people aged over 65 and those with pre-existing conditions. We were also given approval to vaccinate children aged 5-11 across the network and will continue to vaccinate people living in rural and remote communities, as needed.

Delivering COVID-19 vaccines to people living in a large number of geographically dispersed communities was a massive undertaking for our workforce, involving efforts from the whole organisation - from health teams to staff from administrative, technical or corporate services areas. At the same time, we continued to deliver our regular primary health, emergency care and mental health services and programs.

Working with the Federal Government, we developed a standalone COVID-19 response plan and established dedicated teams in Broken Hill and Dubbo to deliver the program. Some of our existing staff were seconded from their usual roles to assist with the roll-out. We also recruited additional nursing and health staff on short-term contracts and our Visitor Experience team shifted their focus from tourism to operating the COVID-19 booking line.



We partnered with other health organisations, such as Local Health Departments and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) including the Bourke Aboriginal Corporation Health Service and Walgett Aboriginal Medical Services, to ensure we could reach and vaccinate as many people as possible. Our support for First Nations communities was particularly noteworthy, with cultural considerations and local engagement applied to supporting this cohort, made vulnerable by the COVID-19 outbreak throughout the region.

We offered vaccinations from our Broken Hill respiratory clinic, as well as throughout the network area that we usually provide healthcare to, via our primary health clinics and pop-up clinics, with COVID-19 response teams of nurses and doctors travelling out to communities. In some areas, we set up small clinics in shearing sheds or local pubs, while in other areas, community need saw us assemble mass vaccination hubs where hundreds, and sometimes more than a thousand people, were vaccinated in a day. Our teams would travel out by plane or vehicle, visiting one or more locations on multi-day trips. In some cases, when turnout was lower than expected and extra doses were available, nursing teams would phone around properties, towns and stations close to where they were located to offer the vaccine to anyone not yet vaccinated and ensure surplus dosages were not wasted. Wherever they went, our teams warmly engaged with communities and educated them on the benefits of vaccination.

From Broken Hill, our Volunteer Clinic Coordinators were fundamental in helping to run the vaccination clinics and take bookings. From Dubbo, where we don't traditionally

offer primary health services, the Community Engagement team worked closely with the COVID-19 Response team to contact communities and promote when our teams would be visiting. As the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) did not already have a presence in communities in Western NSW, the South Coast, Hunter and New England, collaborative planning was crucial to ensure we set up clinics in locations suitable to meet the needs of locals. We also needed to consider aspects such as ensuring patients were protected from extreme hot or cold weather while waiting at the clinics, and that our teams had access to the emergency equipment required when administering vaccinations. In some cases, such as when our teams visited Wreck Bay and Jervis Bay on the South Coast, our First Nations staff members joined the team to offer support to the population.

To assist with the logistics of dosages, scheduling and administrative tasks associated with the vaccination program, we moved to using the electronic booking system, HotDoc. This helped to significantly smooth the process and ensure paperwork was completed prior to appointments, allowing our teams to administer more vaccinations in a single day.

At the same time as delivering the vaccination rollout, we continued to run respiratory clinics across the network area that we serve. Additionally, our pilots and clinical staff have continued to work in unusual circumstances, wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE) and participating in an intense daily testing program.

The aviation side of our organisation also supported other healthcare services by transporting health teams, as well as the vaccine itself, to other providers.

**Of the 76,000 COVID-19 vaccinations administered by the Royal Flying Doctor Service nationally, the South Eastern Section delivered over 32,000 vaccinations.**





## Wilcannia – a community in need

In August 2021, the small community of Wilcannia was hit hard with a COVID-19 outbreak. In the short period of about a month, more than 100 people tested positive to the virus. With a population of around 700, the largely Aboriginal community was facing a serious health crisis. We partnered with emergency services, the Local Health District and Maari Ma Health to test, vaccinate and provide care. The Wilcannia community does not have a critical care/intensive care doctor in town. The remote Emergency Department is a nurse-run, with the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South

Eastern Section) providing medical support to critically ill patients via telehealth. At the height of the outbreak, our health team decided to position a retrieval doctor equipped with an intensive care ventilator and critical care equipment at Wilcannia Emergency Department for 14 days to support the community. Additionally, we delivered 47 vaccination clinics from June 2021 to July 2022 in Wilcannia and surrounds. We continue to offer these clinics regularly to ensure the local community can access vaccinations as easily as possible.

**Thank you to each and every staff member across the South Eastern Section for your tireless work in supporting communities through this challenging time.**

## How we help: Emergency retrieval and patient transfer



81

people evacuated in an emergency this year



6,206

inter-hospital transfers of high acuity patients

When a medical emergency occurs in the outback, people living, working and travelling in rural and remote locations rely on the Flying Doctor to be there for them.

And that's exactly what our 24-hour aeromedical emergency Retrieval team is trained and equipped to do. Travelling in specially fitted out medical aircraft and vehicles, our critical care doctors and flight nurses respond to all kinds of emergencies from farming accidents and injuries to heart attacks, premature labour and motorcycle or vehicle accidents. They are a lifeline for critically ill patients who may otherwise have limited or no access to vital medical care. Our doctors are also available 24/7 to assist with inter-hospital transfers for people with high acuity conditions and give medical advice to people in remote parts of Western NSW.

Through our Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPT) service, patients living in the outback who have non-life-threatening conditions, but require access to medical services in metropolitan or larger regional areas, are transported under the care of a flight or registered nurse. We operate this service seven days a week, from 6am to 10pm for people living in Western and Southern NSW, moving them between their homes, hospitals and clinics by plane or ambulance.







## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- We have boosted the reach and coverage of our Emergency Retrieval service with the addition of a daily 12-hour shift (10am-10pm) at our Broken Hill Base, on behalf of NSW Health. This is on top of our existing 24-hour service and ensures we have more pilots and critical care teams available to respond in a timely manner should a medical emergency arise across our network.
- We also increased coverage of our NEPT service from Bankstown with a second eight-hour shift introduced. Pilots and flight nurses are now available across morning and afternoon shifts Monday to Friday to assist with transferring patients with non-life-threatening conditions.
- Growing our education and training capability continues to be a focus for our highly-trained Retrieval team. After a pause in training due to the lockdown in the second half of 2021, we were able to resume in 2022 and held two external training days. In March, we were part of a mass casualty exercise with NSW Ambulance and Dubbo Volunteer Rescue Association, and in May, we ran an emergency medicine training day for rural GPs in partnership with GP Synergy. We are planning to do more training with other organisations in the next financial year.
- We now have a position accredited by the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine to train a registrar over a six-month period to become a clinical educator. The position is currently filled by a Retrieval Doctor and Emergency Medicine Trainee located in Dubbo. In this role, the doctor is learning how to teach critical care and emergency medicine skills to other doctors and nurses. This position aligns with the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) goal to grow our education and training, drawing on our expertise in critical care and emergency medicine.
- Our Retrieval team was also active in the South Eastern Section's COVID-19 response, with several patients suspected to have COVID-19 transported from remote NSW by our service during the 2021 outbreak. At this time, following a request from NSW Ambulance, we established an extra aeromedical retrieval shift in order to manage the surge in demand across Western NSW. Additionally, some South Eastern Section retrieval doctors were stationed in Wilcannia for 14 days during a community outbreak in August. For more about this, see page 13.



# How we help:

## Primary Healthcare

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838 clinics conducted  
7,231 patients seen





Despite the enormous challenges of adapting to a rapidly evolving global pandemic, we have continued to meet the healthcare needs of people living and working in remote and rural areas over the last 12 months.

At a time when many other organisations struggled to keep operating, we continued to grow the number of communities we visit, the number of services we deliver and the number of people we employ.

Our diverse, experienced and highly-skilled team includes doctors, nurses, dentists, Aboriginal health workers, mental health workers and a range of other specialist clinicians. Through 24-hour telehealth support and mobile and primary health clinics they deliver dental, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, chronic disease management and a range of other primary health services. We also employ a specialist breast care nurse with the generous support of the McGrath Foundation and provide more than 400 medical chests with emergency pharmaceuticals and medical supplies in remote locations across the network.

Without the Flying Doctor, many of these services would simply not be available in the bush. We continue to innovate, grow and adapt to meet the rapidly changing healthcare needs of the communities we serve.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- Our Primary Healthcare team was instrumental in the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program across the network. Working in close collaboration with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and other key agencies, we vaccinated more than 32,000 people, many of whom live in remote communities and were reluctant to go to big regional centres for fear of contracting COVID-19. This work saw us visit a number of remote communities like Nymagee and Wee Waa for the first time. It has also led to many communities in Western NSW reaching out to our Primary Health team for other services and clinics.
- We continued with our ambitious expansion of services in the north-west region of NSW with new clinics delivered in communities such as Grawin, Weilmoringle and Engonnia. These clinics were attended by a doctor and primary health nurse, and also offered mental health and dental services. This expansion has been underpinned by a service development model and the employment of dedicated regional service managers.
- Our Mobile Primary Health vehicles continued to deliver vital care across the network, with a particular focus on chronic disease management. This aligns closely with our patient-centred care model. Our fleet grew to include new vehicles that also enable telehealth capacity. Funding from the NSW State Government and generous donors assisted with the expansion of this program.
- We continued to expand our telehealth capacity as part of our Digital Health Strategy with fixed and mobile units. Telehealth is designed to augment and build rather than replace our existing primary health services, the telehealth service allows us to offer more comprehensive care to people in the communities we serve.
- We received grant funding to research and trial a workforce model for rural and remote communities.

## Case Study

# A powerful and positive voice for change



Our Aboriginal Leadership Group is driving reconciliation, inclusiveness and cultural awareness across the organisation and the communities we serve.

A lot has changed at the Flying Doctor since Kellyann Johnson joined the team four years ago. Back then the proud Yuin woman, who was born on the NSW South Coast and raised on Wiradjuri country, was one of only two First Nations staff on the Dubbo Base.

Fast forward to today and Kellyann is now part of a dynamic Aboriginal Leadership Group (ALG) which is bringing a First Nations perspective to discussions on programs, service delivery as well as our Aboriginal Employment Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan. She explains why this is so important:

***“The Flying Doctor’s South Eastern Section covers about 15 First Nations countries. It’s vital we engage properly in a culturally-safe manner with these communities.”***

The ALG is currently made up of 12 members, the majority of whom have First Nations heritage. The group meets monthly and reports directly to the executive and board. Despite being barely a year old, it already has some impressive achievements to its credit.

Perhaps the biggest project the ALG has rolled out to date is a new Cultural Perspective Training Program for staff. Designed, produced and delivered by members of the ALG, the program draws heavily on local awareness and knowledge from communities within our footprint. A second component of this training will be a series of on-country experiences offered to all staff across the organisation.





Community engagement is another area where the ALG has been particularly busy over the last 12 months. This has included reconciliation activities like a rock painting event at the Dubbo Visitor Experience which brought together children and adults from First Nations and non-First Nations communities. It also includes outreach visits to communities like Cobar, Narromine and Wellington.

Kellyann says another critical area of work has been to support other areas of the business to achieve their objectives under the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

*“We’ve reached out to teams across the organisation to ask if they would like to partner with us. We’re not here to do it all; reconciliation is for everyone. But the Aboriginal Leadership Group has a key role to play in helping the Flying Doctor achieve its objectives under the RAP.”*

One ALG initiative that Kellyann says has resonated with community and staff members alike has been the commissioning of a local First Nations artist to produce artwork that tells the story of our organisation. The design has been used for employee-only polo shirts, marketing equipment and to highlight our written information.

*“The t-shirts have been a big hit. I heard a story of an Aboriginal patient who was transported in one of our planes recently. The patient reported how comforting it was to see our staff members wearing those shirts. That was really inspiring for me.”*

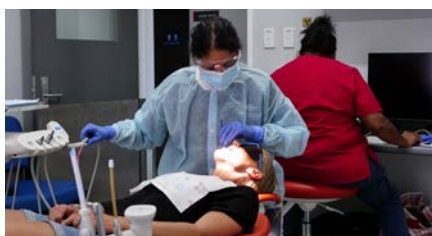
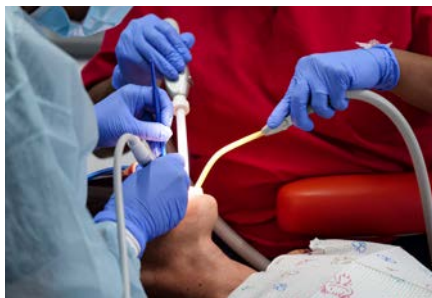


Kellyann says having the strong backing of the executive has been critical to the success of the ALG:

*“There’s a genuine willingness there to work together collaboratively and move forward.”*

After a successful start, the ALG has bold ambitions for what they hope to achieve in the months and years ahead. For example, the group now has their own car for community engagement (which will of course be wrapped in First Nations art) to use for outreach activities in communities across the network.

*“I think the ALG will continue to grow and stand up. I’m really looking forward to getting out and reengaging after a challenging couple of years.”*



## How we help: Dental Care



**665**  
Clinics conducted



**31**  
Locations



**3,775**  
Dental patient visits

The South Eastern Section Dental team delivers oral health programs and services to communities which would otherwise not have local access to dental care.

The team operates from our Dubbo and Broken Hill bases, travelling out to remote communities using our specialist dental van.

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- While COVID-19 lockdowns and safety protocols once again restricted our Dental team's ability to visit some of the smaller communities across the network, we continued to deliver vital dental and oral health programs wherever possible. Responding to the wants and needs of individual communities has been critical throughout this period.
- When restrictions began easing, our Dental team prioritised the treatment of patients who were unable to receive the care they needed during the pandemic. There is strong focus in the outback on providing pain relief and basic dental care procedures such as extractions.
- Despite the complications of navigating border shutdowns, our fly-in-fly-out model continues to be a success. The model allows the Flying Doctor to draw on the experience and expertise of dentists from around the country who join our service for short periods to assist us to serve the dental needs of rural and remote communities.
- We have continued to support our Dental team members to enhance their skills with training programs, such as our Indigenous Dental Assistant Traineeship, which has continued to go from strength to strength. Thank you to private donors and the Bright Smiles Charity Ride for making this possible.



# How we help:

## Community Engagement

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Understanding and engaging with the complex and changing health needs of the communities we serve is critical to ensuring we continue to deliver the best possible services and care to the bush.

That is why we consult closely with patients visiting our clinics and facilities, people in their homes, Aboriginal Land Councils, local businesses, government agencies and other community groups.

The insights we get through Community Engagement help us measure how our services are performing – and learn what we can do to make them more accessible and suitable. Treating our patients as partners in care helps us identify areas of need which are not currently being met and build better programs and services for the future.



### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- After two years of COVID-19 disruptions, we were pleased to return to regular, face-to-face community engagement activities this year. Regular clinic visits are now back up and running, where the Community Engagement team is once again busy assessing services and getting valuable feedback.
- The Flying Doctor was honoured to be chosen as the official charity partner for the Mundi Mundi Bash, Australia's newest music festival. The Bash provided a great opportunity for the Community Engagement team to meet festival goers and talk about the importance of our life-saving work. Proceeds from the Mundi Undie Run and Nutbush World Record Attempt at the event were kindly donated to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section).
- We were invited to be part of a travelling roadshow organised by Resilience NSW to promote the important work of service providers in communities going through difficulty. Joining other key support organisations like Centrelink and the Salvation Army, our Community Engagement team talked to members of the public about the support programs and services we offer to those doing it tough in rural and remote areas.
- After a four-year hiatus, the iconic Broken Hill Agfair was back bigger and better in May 2022. With a big presence at the event, we promoted our primary and sexual health services, offered free mental health assessments to attendees, as well as showcased upgrades to medical chests and the use of iPads and Automated External Defibrillators.
- We continued to strengthen connections with Aboriginal communities through a range of activities. This included a luncheon held at Dubbo Base for 16 Elders from three different communities in the area. The Elders were given a guided tour of the Visitor Experience Centre, lunch at the Outback Café and an exclusive viewing of our Cultural Perspectives video training package. A similar event was also held with Elders from the Wellington region.
- We facilitated a workshop for our Volunteer Clinic Coordinators to recognise the critical contribution these local people make to the Flying Doctor's work. As well as providing training to participants, the event included a social dinner to thank them for their contribution to the service.

# How we help:

## Mental Health services and Alcohol and Other Drugs programs

The prolonged effects of drought, coupled with challenges of the pandemic such as social isolation and financial stress, have heavily impacted the mental health and wellbeing of those living in rural and remote communities.

Despite the need to pivot to telehealth during lockdown periods, demand for our services has continued to grow.

We have continued to provide clinical intervention and education services, reaching people in need of support through fly-in-fly-out clinics, face-to-face counselling at our Wellbeing Places, telehealth clinics and school and community-based events and workshops.

Making sure we adapt and deliver services that meet the changing needs of the unique communities we serve has remained a priority. Our team of therapists, mental health nurses, psychologists, AoD counsellors, community engagement officers, peer workers and child and family workers collaborate to ensure that the most appropriate and accessible support is provided.

Every day, the team apply a range of psycho-therapies and psycho-education strategies to treat presentations of low mood, anxiety, grief, trauma and suicidal ideation. Alcohol, methamphetamines and cannabis are the top three AoD presentations, and the team are qualified naloxone dispensers so loved ones can become trained and equipped to reverse an overdose and potentially save the life of a friend or family member.



**3,411**  
Face-to-face consultations



**4,616**  
Telehealth sessions



**1,649**  
Clinics conducted



**27**  
Service/clinic locations





## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- Working in partnership with the Western NSW Primary Health Network, we developed an Older Persons Mental Health program. This provides participants with clinical care and coordination, as well as practical assistance with technology, vaccinations, assessments and reconnection with loved ones and the community. We also provide arts, cultural and wellness events including activities such as Tai Chi classes, yoga and meditation sessions. Older people were reached through partnerships with aged care facilities, via our primary health clinics, local supermarkets and community phone lines.

As part of the program, we hosted a free Human Book event at the Broken Hill City Library during Seniors Week 2022. A group of 10 older participants shared their life stories and answered questions from an audience of nearly 50 people. The event was well received and other similar initiatives are being planned.

- In collaboration with the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP), our We've Got Your Back (WGYB) program facilitated six butchering workshops at stations and community facilities in Packsaddle, White Cliffs, Tilpa, Pooncarie, Menindee and Wilcannia. The workshops provided farming men and women with the chance to socialise, while also learning butchering skills. It was also an opportunity to promote the South Eastern Section's mental health and related services in a "soft-touch" approach.
- Our three Wellbeing Places in Broken Hill, Dubbo and Lightning Ridge have become important fixtures in each community, supporting locals and providing services based on community needs. More and more people living on the land are visiting these facilities when in town for appointments, a coffee, or to participate in one of our group activities.
- As part of our outreach work with schools, wellbeing workshops were provided regularly at Wilcannia Central School, Tibooburra Public School and White Cliffs Public School. These allow children to experience social and emotional learning through creative outlets such as African drumming, art and crafts, storytelling and nature-based play.
- Our team collaborated with the School Of The Air and charity organisation Dolly's Dream to facilitate adult and child-focused online safety and bullying awareness educational sessions for bush kids, their teachers, parents and governesses. Children on remote and isolated properties are often less exposed to bullying and therefore have fewer skills and knowledge to identify and manage issues that may arise. Parents have also raised concerns about the need for education around online safety and ways to help their children. Around 50 parents and 40 students participated in the sessions. Child and Family Workers from our team were also on hand to assist and provide additional information about our services.
- We formed a partnership with Contact Inc to create RuralCONNECT, an innovative, preventative health approach designed to improve and strengthen health and wellbeing outcomes for remote and isolated children, young people and their families living across the Louth, Tilpa and Wanaaring regions. To date, over 200 families,



children and community members have participated in RuralCONNECT activities, face-to-face. Activities have included early childhood sessions, haircutting, hearing tests, furniture restoration demonstrations and skin and inner health presentations. Our team engaged with 34 families (approximately 50 children) through one-on-one consultations, and connected with communities through newsletters and social media opportunities. Literacy and the first 2,000 days of a child's life are the next focus initiatives for the program, directly targeting identified needs and connecting health information and service intervention to our children and families. We thank Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal for their donation towards this program this year.

- The Guiding Rural and Outback Wellbeing (GROW) program has grown substantially in the past year thanks to a gift from a generous private foundation. Through this community engagement program, we aim to upskill rural communities in their capacity to respond to local mental health, alcohol and other drug challenges. We do this through partnering with local organisations to engage with community members and raise awareness about positive mental health and wellbeing, local services that are available and services provided by the Flying Doctor. The flagship initiative of GROW is our aquaponics program delivered in partnership with schools, Men's Sheds and community gardens in eight sites across the West and Far West. This program teaches participants about growing vegetables and healthy lifestyles. See page 25, for more about how the community of Warren Central School is benefitting from the program. This year, other successful initiatives delivered under GROW included running Coach 2 Cope psychological first aid training for school staff, youth workers and families in Dubbo, Nyngan, Walgett and Cobar. We also facilitated art and walking wellbeing groups led by health professionals as a way for individuals to access support in a free, non-clinical approach. Services Expos where local support organisations came together to provide information and share resources and referral pathways were also delivered by our GROW team. These initiatives were funded by grants awarded by Western NSW Primary Health Network.

# What our clients say



*"This place is like a miracle, so hands-on and good for mental health."* – Wellbeing Place attendee

*"If I hadn't had this support ... I would not have managed. I have been given help to co-ordinate all the services that myself and my husband need ... The service has been an amazing help in times when I have been vulnerable. I have learnt strategies to manage my husband's illness and my anxiety during these COVID-19 times."* – Participant, Older Persons Program, Broken Hill

*"I love the setup of the Wellbeing Place. I find it really relaxing, welcoming and the vibe is good. I feel like I can breathe when I walk through the door."* – Client, Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, Broken Hill

*"[Workers] Sam and Ben both give me a sense of value and are supporting me through what's going on. They are engaging, empathetic, kind, caring and wonderful people. I feel like they are providing me real support in helping me move through my dark times and concerns."* – Client, Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, Broken Hill

*"[The Flying Doctor] has helped our son so much, it has changed our life in ways and made it a lot easier. We are so grateful we came across this service."* – Client, Child and Family Service, Broken Hill

*"[Worker] Peter used various methods to contact me and I was also able to see him both at the Tilpa clinic and the Broken Hill Wellbeing Place. He made me feel very comfortable when helping me work through things. He helped to remove the stigma around talking about mental health issues."* – Client, Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, Cobar

*"My clinician has been one of the biggest helps with getting my life back on track...I have beaten my addiction, held a job, bought a car and recently bought a house. Without him, none of this would have been possible."* – Client, Alcohol and Other Drugs Service, Cobar

*"I have just completed 365 days free from alcohol. The Flying Doctor's support has been instrumental in me achieving this milestone. [My worker's] belief in me has been unwavering throughout my journey."* – Client, Alcohol and Other Drugs Service, Dubbo



# Case Study

## Growing a healthy future

The young people at Warren Central School are planting seeds of hope in their aquaponics garden, made possible through the Flying Doctor's Guiding Rural and Outback Wellbeing (GROW) program.

When the team at Warren Central decided to get involved in GROW by establishing an Aquaponics program at the school a few years back, they never expected to unearth so many enthusiastic green thumbs.

***"I knew it would be a good program for our young ones,"*** says Aboriginal Youth Officer, Pete Mackey. ***"But I was surprised by how excited and happy they were to get involved."***

From humble beginnings, the kids at Warren Central have created a thriving garden which includes a large aquaponics tank stocked with rainbow trout, 12 smaller tanks stocked with yabbies and garden beds. Together, they are producing a rich abundance of fresh, healthy food.

***"We've got shallots, mint and all kinds of bush tucker,"*** Pete explains. ***"And we've got a heap of veggies on the way. We give them away to whoever wants them."***



Pete says GROW and the Aquaponics program is providing the 16 participants with valuable opportunities to learn and develop new skills.

***"There's lots of science involved in measuring and testing things like the PH levels in the water, which is great. There are also lots of jobs involved like feeding the fish and cleaning the filter nets. That's teaching the kids a lot about responsibility, sustainability and taking care of nature."***

***"Having all that fresh food is also great for teaching young people about healthy eating."***

The garden and aquaponics space has also created a safe and comfortable environment for young people to talk about wellbeing and mental health. With support from the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section), it has also been used to provide education and early intervention around the prevention of alcohol and other drugs.

Ursula Ryan, from the South Eastern Section's Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs team, says there are also stories of students who were disengaged from education reconnecting with learning and returning to school to take part in the Aquaponics program and other art, culture, marine and wellbeing activities related to it.

With more and more kids wanting to get involved in Warren Central's Aquaponics project, Pete has bold plans for the future. He even hopes to tap into a popular pastime to make a positive difference to the local environment.

***"Pretty much all the kids around here are keen on fishing. So, we're looking into developing a breeding setup here for native perch, which we could release into the river system to help keep it healthy."***

***"We're also looking at breeding yabbies here which we could release into the river and sell to local fishermen to raise a bit of extra money for the program."***

# How we work: fleet and equipment

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The Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) serves communities in some of the most remote areas of Australia. To do this, we depend on a large fleet of aircraft and road vehicles.

To keep our fleet properly equipped, maintained and performing at its best, we have a highly trained and hard-working team of engineers, aviation experts, operations staff, safety experts and ground crew.

Because of them, our doctors, nurses, dentists and other medical practitioners are able to provide care where it is needed most.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- With the closing down of our base in Mascot, five of our aircraft went through an extensive upgrade and refresh process before being redeployed across the network. This involved cleaning, maintenance, avionics upgrades as well as the installation of cargo nets. One of these aircraft was reconfigured to allow it to deliver remote clinics. Another two were redeployed to Broken Hill Base to support the traditional services.
- We completed the sale of four of our aircraft, the last of our fleet still using the outmoded Garmin avionics system. This has assisted with our objective of creating greater commonality across the fleet, which makes our aircraft more versatile and more easily redeployed between different bases across the network.
- The maintenance capacity of our base in Dubbo continued to grow with the addition of an avionics workshop and parts store. We also employed a new apprentice in avionics (B2) and redeployed an airframe/engine (B1) engineer from Mascot to support this enhanced capacity. This reduces the need to fly aircraft to Broken Hill for maintenance, which minimises costs and creates greater operational efficiencies.
- A new Electronic Technical Log System was trialed at our Bankstown Base. The new system, which involves pilots logging flight details on an onboard tablet, removes the need for paper logs and makes flight data available instantaneously. The trial was a success, and we are currently moving to the next stage of initiating the change management process of engaging stakeholders, training staff members in how to use the technology, and rolling it out across the rest of the fleet.
- A new Mental Health Telehealth mobile unit will soon hit the road travelling to remote communities in the Western region to deliver mental health and wellbeing consultations and telehealth sessions. Significant investment has gone into kitting out the vehicle with state-of-the-art telehealth equipment and furnishing the space so that it is welcoming for people who visit in person for a consultation.



4,195,619  
kilometres travelled



19  
Aircraft used  
throughout the year



10  
Patient Transport  
Vehicles



38  
Primary Health  
Vehicles



1  
Dental Van

# How we work: facilities and upgrades

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With two main bases, several health facilities across the network, corporate headquarters, Wellbeing Places, remote clinics, staff housing and two large tourism offerings, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) has an extensive collection of sites, buildings, hangars, infrastructure and equipment to service and maintain.

Ensuring these assets and facilities meet the needs of people living, working and travelling in rural and remote communities, while also providing safe workplaces for our staff, is vitally important.

We regularly make improvements and upgrades to infrastructure and bases across our network. We also look for opportunities where redevelopments or new facilities and equipment will enhance the services we provide. Throughout the years of the pandemic, we have not completed any significant projects.





## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- We are well progressed on the development of a stand-alone Wellbeing Place in Broken Hill. With the support of generous donors we have been able to secure the land and design a custom-built facility. Construction is slated to commence towards the end of the year.
- Work has commenced on a Master Plan for the Broken Hill Base to explore future growth and development opportunities for the site as a whole. This has come off the back of winning a \$5.5 million grant through the NSW Government's Regional Tourism Activation Fund to redevelop the Broken Hill Visitor Experience. With a major redevelopment project also planned for the Clive Bishop Medical Centre, co-located at the Broken Hill Base, the Master Plan will ensure a strategic and planned approach to future development for the base.
- To meet the requirements of increasing our engineering capacity at the Dubbo Base, improvements were made to the hangar to create more racking and storage areas for engineers and additional equipment.
- A Building Inspection Checklist was introduced to help identify maintenance and repair work needed across our facilities. The checklist has already proved to be an important tool in driving improved safety standards for our buildings and infrastructure.
- Despite some disruptions during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2021, we have been able to complete several smaller upgrades and maintenance projects across the network. Projects included automating the roller door of our Ambulance Garage at Lightning Ridge Airport for improved staff safety and accessibility; installing signage and completing landscaping work at the Dubbo Visitor Experience, completing fire safety upgrades at various sites and upgrading the generator at the Dubbo Base.



# How we work: Clinical Quality and Safety

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Focusing on clinical risk, quality and safety is critical to maintaining the highest possible standard of healthcare services in rural and remote communities.

That is why we place such a high priority on keeping our key frameworks and accreditation up-to-date – to ensure we continue to meet best practice.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- Our Quality team supported the organisation with the health component of the successful ISO 90001 accreditation process.
- We spent much of the year preparing for the National Standards Accreditation process in August 2022. Completed every four years, this is a thorough review of our clinical systems and processes. A huge body of work is involved in preparing for it.
- With a comprehensive audit plan in place, we now have built-in opportunities for training and corrective action where deficiencies are identified.
- Our Clinical Governance Framework has been rewritten. Adapted from the National Standards, our new Framework highlights ownership and responsibilities for compliance with the standards.
- Infection prevention and control has been a key focus throughout the pandemic, and following best practices helped minimise outbreaks and impact on service delivery. A new Infection Control Specialist commenced in a full-time capacity, based in Dubbo. With nearly 30 years of nursing experience, 20 of those in infection prevention and control focused roles, this staff member will ensure we continue to keep our patients and staff safe from preventable infection.



# How we work:

## Organisational Risk and Assurance

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Our Risk and Assurance team ensures the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) maintains a safe workplace and operations to deliver the services rural and remote communities depend on.

The Risk and Assurance team manage this through audit and accreditation programs, investigations, the development of frameworks and other risk management activities.



### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- We successfully maintained our certification against the ISO 90001: 2015 Quality Management Systems in February 2022. This is a triennial process that thoroughly investigates management systems across the entire organisation. Meeting these quality and safety standards is critical for continuous improvement and when tendering for contracts.
- Our Principal Advisor of Health, Safety and Environment played a hands-on role in clinics in remote communities such as Innamincka, Cobar and Lightning Ridge.
- We are developing a new Organisation Information Management Framework. With an increasing need for strong information systems to manage patient records, privacy and corporate information, this was an important body of work. Representatives from each area of the organisation participated in developing the Framework, which was presented to the Executive for approval in July 2022.
- We implemented a Business Improvement (commonly known as a Change Management) Plan for implementing new structures, processes, and equipment within the organisation. The Aviation regulator, CASA, has approved the plan.

# How we work:

## Aviation training and proficiency checks

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Supporting our pilots and aviation crews to participate in approved training and skills development ensures, as an organisation, we meet all regulatory compliance requirements, while also delivering the highest standards in safety.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) under the Air Operators Certificate (AOC) runs an approved training and checking system aligned to Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR) Part 119. This system sets out the regulatory and organisation specific training requirements which are delivered in partnership with the South Eastern Section CASR Part 142 Aviation Training team. This means we can train our own pilots and provide bespoke programs to ensure their skills are up-to-date. We also run skills refresher courses for all aviation staff and have our own Flight Simulator located at our Dubbo Base for use by our pilots.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- In order to keep our pilots fully trained and proficiency checked during the extended COVID-19 lockdown in 2021, we gained approval from CASA for our second interim Safety Risk Mitigation Plan. This plan allowed for the use of our Dubbo Flight Simulator for proficiency checks from September to December 2021 when pilots were restricted from travelling interstate. Normally, our pilots travel to Maroochydore to complete the training and checks they require to continue flying. Our Flight Operations and Aviation Training teams worked with CASA to develop the Safety Risk Mitigation Plan which allowed for 44 pilots to complete the required checks in Dubbo. A similar plan was in place in the previous financial year. The South Eastern Section is the only section of the Royal Flying Doctor Service that currently has an approved Safety Risk Mitigation Plan for utilisation of its own simulator for pilot proficiency checks.
- New flight operations rules came into effect on 2 December 2021. In order to transition our AOC to comply with the new rules, over the past two years we have completed a large body of work to update and rewrite more than 30 manuals, registers and documents.
- The airfield database of the Dubbo Flight Simulator was upgraded with the addition of visual airfield models of Dubbo, Launceston and Bankstown.
- As part of our increased collaboration with the Queensland Section, our Aviation Training team (Part 142) is working to develop flight simulation and training opportunities.

# Our People

Our caring and dedicated workforce has faced immense pressure throughout the pandemic, navigating disruptions to services, closed borders and adapting to new ways of working.

At the same time, we have continued to deliver much-needed care and support to the rural and remote communities we serve.

Our focus in 2021-2022 has been to continue building a strong, skilled workforce, where our people feel supported and safe. We have spent time developing and improving our workplace and People & Culture practices to ensure our workforce were able to focus on the important work of supporting communities, patients and improving health outcomes.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- We supported the organisation to grow rapidly in order to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations across the network, while also continuing our usual services. This required ensuring we had the right people in the locations and communities where our services were needed most. Our work involved accelerated development of policies and processes to enable growth and to be able to adapt to an ever-changing pandemic work environment.
- With continued pandemic restrictions and lockdowns throughout 2020 and 2021, we re-shaped how we work to support the organisation in developing and enabling flexible and hybrid work practices. Our leaders were provided with development opportunities to assist them in leading their teams throughout this change and guiding our operations through this challenging time. This will continue to be our focus over the coming year as we continue to navigate new ways of working and the new workplace landscape.
- Attracting and retaining a skilled workforce across all areas of the organisation from Corporate Services to Aviation and Health Services continues to be a challenge. It was evident the appeal of working for an iconic organisation helped to ensure we were able to successfully retain and recruit the workforce we needed. The challenges we faced in the health space are common to the industry as a whole and were reflected in the findings of the recent Legislative Council Report on 'Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales'. This report found: "that there is a critical shortage of health professionals across rural, regional and remote communities resulting in staffing deficiencies in hospitals and health services".



376  
Headcount at  
30 June 2022

- A significant part of the year was committed to supporting the closure of our base in Mascot, following the ending of the contract with NSW Air Ambulance in December 2021. This was a large change management piece of work with 51 employees directly impacted and long-lasting flow-on effects to other team members.
- We highly valued the contributions of each employee and we worked collaboratively to support impacted employees through the process. This included access to an innovative career transition support platform providing personalised services including job seeking skills, coaching, development and online learning. We were able to offer some employees the opportunity to fill other roles within the organisation.
- This year also saw other areas of change and growth in the People & Culture space to ensure we had the workforce to deliver vital services to our communities. This included implementation of the 24/7 Operations Centre, organisational re-designs within the Mental Health and Alcohol & Other Drugs team and the introduction of new team members to support the patient transport service delivery in Bankstown and our Tourism team at the Dubbo Visitor Experience Café.





## Staff profile:

# Carol Doyle, Primary Health Nurse Team Leader, Broken Hill



"I'm proud to be part of a team that delivers vital healthcare to the outback.

I grew up in Far West New South Wales. From a young age, I always knew that if we needed help in remote locations, we could rely on the Flying Doctor to be there.

When I started nursing over 20 years ago, I always aspired to work with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. I've now been part of the Primary Health Nursing team at Broken Hill Base for two and a half years. We're a very small team. There are three nurses and an Aboriginal health practitioner. We visit 17 different locations.

Some days I fly out to a remote community with a doctor. Other days, with another nurse, I drive to remote locations for a nurse-led clinic which could involve an overnight stay.

I'm really proud of our nurse-led clinics. They are very holistic and include prevention and early detection of new chronic disease, as well as the management of existing chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

During the pandemic, I was involved in COVID-19 testing and immunising in Broken Hill and our network communities. Our primary health clinics continued except the clinic in Queensland because we weren't able to cross the border.

I find it rewarding being able to assist a patient with a new diagnosis and help them navigate their way through the first appointments, medication and treatments. It is very daunting for the patients so being able to support them through the process relieves a lot of stress.

When I completed my post-graduate year, I did a month placement in a remote clinic in Menindee. That's where I really started to get a passion for primary healthcare. We were able to see very sick people, have them retrieved by the Flying Doctor and then follow up with them when they returned. We did some really effective primary health programs and prevention work and could see how that reduced the amount of retrievals needed.

I definitely get a sense of satisfaction from my job. It's very important for people living in remote areas to have access to healthcare. When we travel with a doctor, some clinics are held once a month so it's the only time people have any healthcare in their community. The volunteers pick us up from the airstrip, help run the clinic and clean up afterwards. It's a unique working environment, but everyone is appreciative to have us in town."

# Our Supporters



People dancing the Nutbush at Mundi Mundi Bash supporting the Flying Doctor.

We are thankful to our wonderful supporters for their enormous generosity over the last year. This support has had a huge impact on our work delivering vital healthcare to rural, regional and remote communities.

As we faced another challenging year navigating COVID-19, our caring donors stood firm alongside outback families and communities. Their commitment meant we were able to deliver equipment and services over and above existing government support during this unprecedented emergency.

Our supporters have kept our work going in a variety of ways. Some have made a generous commitment through individual philanthropy. Many community-minded locals have hosted fundraisers or donated their time as volunteers. Others have visited one of our bases or made a commitment through regular giving. Whatever their contribution, our supporters have ensured that we could continue to provide vital healthcare to outback families and communities in the bush.

This year, thanks to the continued generosity of our supporters we received \$26 million in donations. This support has kept our life-saving programs running. This extraordinary support increased access for our front-line teams to the far west of NSW, so more Australians had access to mental health support.

Our supporters making a regular contribution each month provided reliable and sustainable revenue needed to plan and invest in long-term health program delivery. This planning makes it possible for our aeromedical teams to be trained for every emergency. It also allows us to continue to equip our aircraft with the latest technology and equipment, so no matter where we go, we are prepared to save lives. Regular

giving supporters continued to help close the gap in health outcomes between rural and metropolitan Australians.

Our community fundraisers also went above and beyond this year, finding ways to support despite the challenges of the pandemic. A special thank you goes to Margaret Symes (pictured) who walked a gruelling 330 kilometres across the outback to raise much-needed funds for our Wellbeing Place in Broken Hill. Her extraordinary effort also raised important awareness for rural mental health. We were also the proud charity partner for the inaugural Mundi Mundi Bash in April 2022. Thanks to the community's generosity, more than \$80,000 was raised by proceeds from the festival's fundraising activities. Thank you to everyone who supported us in this way.

We are immensely grateful to our philanthropic donors, trusts, foundations and corporate partners who have stood with us to ensure the vital health needs of rural, regional and remote communities are met. Read more about how these significant gifts have enabled the long-term development of healthcare services, as well as provided immediate support for emerging opportunities on the ground on page 40.

To every single supporter, we send a deep and heartfelt message of gratitude. You have made such a life-changing difference to rural and remote Australians.



Our CEO Greg Sam with Margaret Symes, Community Fundraiser Raised over \$22,000.



## Hear from our supporters



*"Sometimes the only people farmers may see is the Flying Doctor. We wanted to donate because the team does such a brilliant job at helping so many of the rural communities we support."* – **Justine Gilfillan, co-founder of Fifty for a Farmer since 2020.**



*"Rural Australia does not have access to the same level of care as major cities. The Royal Flying Doctor Service provides a critical service so sick or injured people can get help as quickly as possible. I am motivated to assist because it is an essential life-saving service relying on donations to operate."* – **Terence Miller, took part in the Mudgee Classic in 2021.**



*"We travel in remote parts of Australia, and it is a great comfort to know that there is an emergency service we can rely on. We have long been aware of the important work done by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and are happy to donate to such a good cause."* – **Lois and Richard Cooper, Regular Giving Supporters since 2012.**



*"The Flying Doctor [TV show] created admiration of the everyday life-saving heroes in the mind of this little girl, who later had a chance to come to Australia for study. I am happy to make little regular contributions to the work of this real hero team."* – **Shi Lin, donating since 2016.**



*"We often take things in life for granted and healthcare is one such example. Australia is a country with very isolated regions. The importance and need for the Flying Doctor is clear, and I personally can't imagine how difficult life would be for the outback communities without it."* – **Talline Zarzavatjian, Regular Giving Supporter since 2021.**



*"Through my many outback adventures with my husband John, we have seen first-hand how remote and isolated some communities are. This was my motivation to start volunteering with the service over 12 years ago. Volunteering at the Mundi Mundi Bash this year was a highlight."* – **Shirley Butcher, Volunteer since 2010.**



# Our community

We have dedicated this page to those outstanding people in our community who have pulled together again, stepped up and made a real difference by raising vital funds to support communities in outback Australia. This continued support from our most valued fundraisers means everything to families in outback Australia who, without the services of the Flying Doctor, would struggle to access basic healthcare needs.

From cycling across the outback and driving cars in the mud to a Gala Ball and everything in between, it is great to see our loyal supporters out there again raising funds and awareness of the importance of the healthcare services provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service – we sincerely thank you all!



## Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary

Every year, our long-standing supporters, the Broken Hill Women's Auxiliary, raise significant funds through various activities including raffles and their world-famous Christmas Puddings. This year, the group's much-loved Ball was back after a break due to COVID-19 – and what an event it was! Funds raised provided vital support for the new Broken Hill Wellbeing Place, an innovative mental health initiative.

**\$95,208 raised**



## Dubbo Support Group

Long-time supporters, the Dubbo Support Group worked tirelessly with the Lightning Ridge Support Group to put on raffles, cake stalls, Mobile Education Unit appearances at local fairs and numerous fundraising events throughout Dubbo, Lightning Ridge and their supporting communities. The Group has committed \$750,000 to support two very exciting new projects.



## Friends in the UK

Based in London, the Friends in the UK raises funds for Australian outback communities through their annual Gala ball, various other events and gifts from individuals. In September 2021, they held a supporter reception at Stoke Lodge showcasing the impact of the vital work of the Flying Doctor in remote communities of Australia.



## Outback Car Trek

**PARTICIPANTS: 192**

As soon as borders re-opened, the Outback Car Trek committee sprang into action, organising a week-long expedition across New South Wales and Queensland, finishing in picturesque Hervey Bay. The group, which consisted of 86 cars, travelled through local communities fundraising and supporting isolated Australians that call the outback their home. The Trekkers, as always, had a great time and are looking forward to doing it all again next year.

**Over \$1 million raised**





## Silver City Bush Treadlers

**PARTICIPANTS: 66 CYCLISTS**

Since 1996, June and her team of avid cyclists from Broken Hill have raised in excess of \$750,000, travelling along some of the roughest roads and most spectacular landscapes of the Australian outback.

We are thankful for the support of this annual 2-week bicycle ride to raise funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section).

**Over \$19,000 raised**



## Bright Smiles Charity Ride

**PARTICIPANTS: 37**

This year saw the sixth Bright Smiles Charity Ride, which set off from the beautiful Southern Highlands in April. Over four days, participants rode through the Snowy Mountains, finishing in Bowral. Funds raised helped to provide much-needed dental care to remote and rural Australians.

**\$130,842 raised**



## Khan's Supa IGA

Popular family run Khan's IGA supermarket has again supported our outback communities through generous donations from their loyal customers and through their support at locally run events.

**\$13,355 raised**



## Outback Air Race

This exciting time trial event, which is held across several states in outback Australia, takes place over two weeks every three years. Pilots and teams take on the adventure of a navigational challenge as their planes fill the skies. They travel from destination to destination visiting towns and raising funds for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The event was postponed until August 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions. We look forward to an exciting race.



## World Flight 2021

**PARTICIPANTS: 130**

Teams from around Australia participated in this seven-day event with participants operating their cockpit simulators continually over the week, visiting 41 airports on seven continents during this time. This exciting community fundraiser started in 2000 and has raised more than \$400,000 over the last 20 years.

**\$13,000 raised**



## TOMRA Return and Earn

**PARTICIPANTS: 600 LOCATIONS ACROSS NSW**

A unique partnership saw TOMRA Return and Earn recycling program nominate us as their sole 2021 charity partner. Participants were able to select to donate 10 cents for each bottle or can they recycled to help isolated outback families.

**Over \$142,000 raised**





## Philanthropy

As we face ongoing challenges to ensure our patients can access around-the-clock healthcare both reliably and safely, we are immensely grateful to our donors and partners who have stood with us to ensure the needs of rural, regional and remote communities are met.

Long-standing corporate partners like Hare & Forbes, Santos, Slingsby Holdings, TAL, Unconscious Potential, and Washington H Soul Pattinson, as well as many generous individuals, trusts and foundations, help us to achieve this important mission.

From donations which enable us to be agile and responsive, to gifts that support the long-term development of our strategic goals, we thank our partners for their generosity and vision.

This year, we worked with partners to realise a number of innovative projects through significant grants and multi-year funding. We partnered with our supporters on key issues that matter to them most, including:

- Development plans for a new, multi-purpose Wellbeing Place in Broken Hill to service Far West NSW with mental health support. Construction will commence towards the end of the year.
- Expansion of our GROW (Guiding Rural and Outback Wellbeing) program, which supports children and young people with mental health, wellbeing and drug and alcohol education while teaching them how to grow plants and cultivate fish.
- Bespoke women's health services focused on reproductive health to benefit those living many hours from a main town or services hub.
- Significant support to recruit an Aboriginal Nurse to work in remote communities in West NSW and provide culturally-safe healthcare.

To all our philanthropic supporters, we thank you for your enduring commitment to the health of rural, regional and remote Australia. Without your support and dedication, many of our programs in these communities would simply not exist.





**With the support of visionary partners like Washington H Soul Pattinson, we now have the latest in-flight technology to bring better support to our patients.**

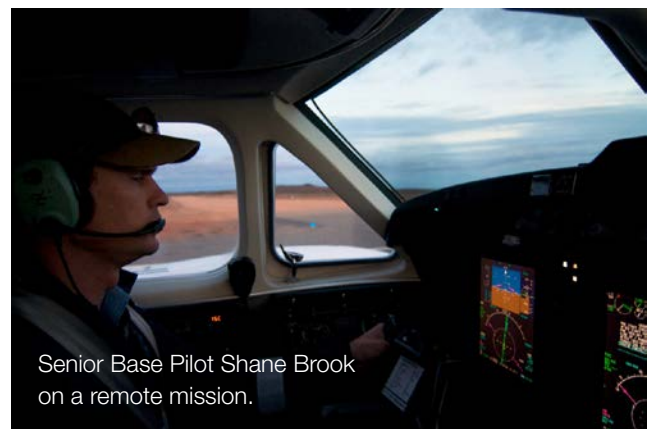
Our fleet is required to undergo regular upgrades to ensure they are operating at the highest possible standards for the safety of our patients and staff. Thanks to our partner Washington H Soul Pattinson (WHSP), we were able to secure seven Flightcell DZMX tracking units for our Beechcraft King Air B350 and B200 aircraft to significantly improve communications between staff in flight and on the ground.

WHSP has had a historic and profound association with our organisation. Founder Lewy Pattinson donated the first aircraft to our section in 1940, the De Havilland Dragonfly, which appears on the new \$20 note. This aircraft carried more patients over longer distances than previous models at the time.

WHSP Chairman Robert Millner and CEO Todd Barlow continue to support us today maintaining a relationship between the two organisations that is over 80 years old.

We are greatly appreciative of the ongoing support from WHSP, which has improved communications for seven of our fleet responsible for delivering emergency and primary healthcare services. Uninterrupted GPS tracking via satellite and cellular networks allows us to connect with our pilots no matter where they are, providing improved service and safety for the specialist aeromedical team and patients in critical situations. This technology enables our pilots to be in contact through radio or their mobile phones anywhere in the country, at any altitude.

A heartfelt thank you to WHSP for helping our fleet bring life-saving emergency and primary care to people and communities in the rural and remote areas we service.



Senior Base Pilot Shane Brook on a remote mission.



# Gifts in Wills

## Supporter profile: Eric's lasting impact



Wonderful supporters, like Eric, who make the kind-hearted decision to leave a gift in their Will to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) help ensure that we will be there for outback communities in need for generations to come.

Eric loves the outback. So much so that after completing his teaching qualifications in Armidale, he spent all his career living and working in country towns including Mittagong, Dubbo, Goolgowi and Bathurst.

Even today at 81-years-old, he enjoys getting out on long driving trips to explore the Far West of NSW and visit communities like Tibooburra. ***"I just love the red sand hills and the outback people."***

Eric's first interaction with the Flying Doctor came back in the early 1970s when he was living in the small town of Hillston near Griffith. His young daughter had fallen from a stool while taking clothes off the line and broke her arm badly. After several days in Griffith Hospital her condition worsened, and the Flying Doctor was called to pick her up to be taken to Sydney for emergency surgery.

Then 12 years ago, Eric found himself in need of our life-saving service when he woke up with the tingling sensation of pins and needles all over his body. He took himself to the local hospital, where the heart specialist said he was in a critical condition and had to get down to Sydney quickly. Within minutes Eric was on his way to the airport, where a Flying Doctor plane came to take him to Prince of Wales Hospital for quadruple by-pass surgery.

Eric says he couldn't be more grateful to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) who were there to help him that day.

***"Without the Flying Doctor team, I wouldn't be here. They've given me 12 wonderful years of extra life so far. They're very dedicated people. What they do is a calling, not just a job."***

Outside of his personal experiences, Eric has also seen first-hand the impact the Flying Doctor has had on rural, regional and remote communities. He used to visit Willandra Station, now known as Willandra National Park, when he lived in Hillston and remembers a family there whose supplies only came in once a year. He estimates that the cemetery out there is about 50% full of women who died in childbirth in the days before the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

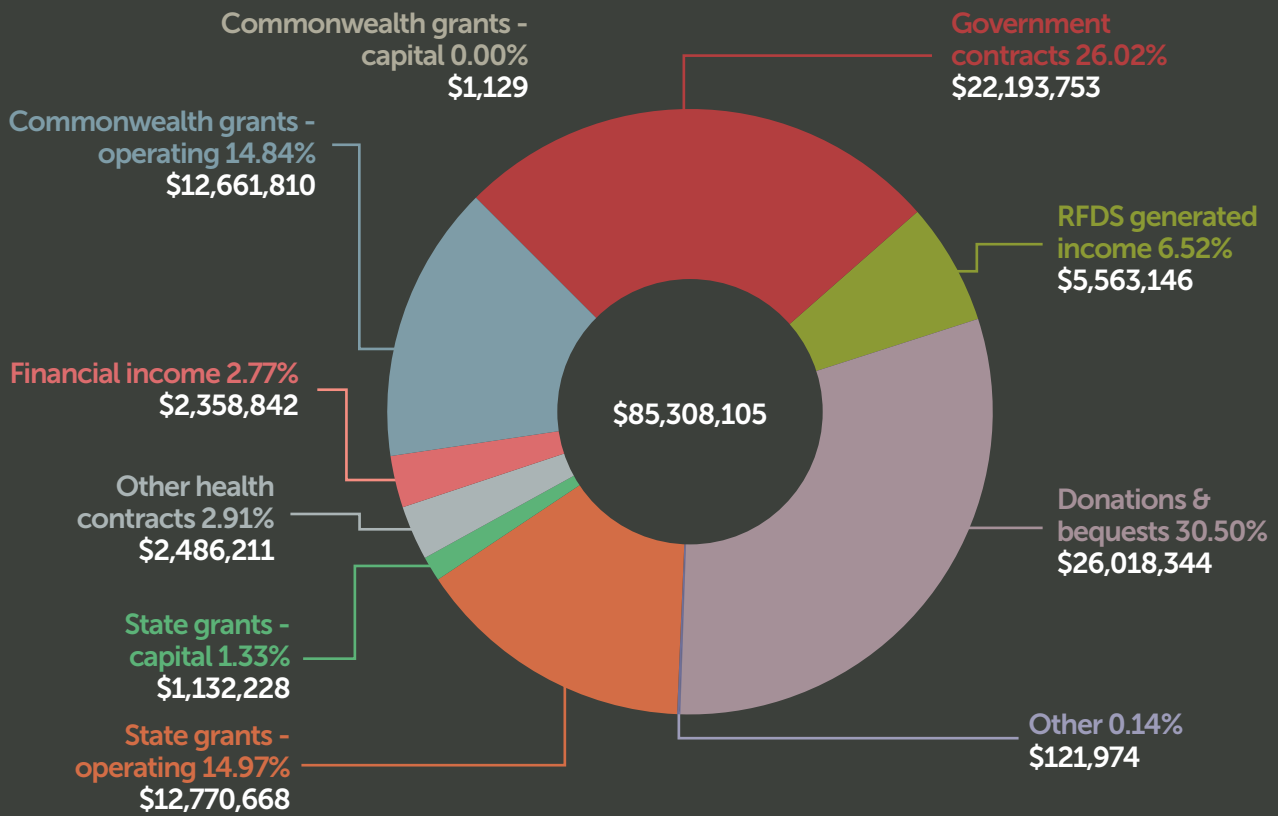
Eric chose to leave a gift in his Will to the Flying Doctor to ***"say thanks"***, but also to make sure others living in outback Australia have equal access to the vital care, support and peace of mind he has been given.

***"People who live out there face great hardships. Without the Flying Doctor providing that mantle of safety, many would simply not survive. Keeping an aircraft running is very expensive, and the Royal Flying Doctor Service needs all the help it can get with that."***



# Where our funding comes from

To 30 June 2022



# Our funding

## TOURISM

Our world-class Visitor Experiences in Dubbo and Broken Hill, our education programs and our online merchandise store provide a vital source of revenue and promote the wonderful work of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) in rural and remote communities.

### Our Tourism Facilities in 2021/2022

	Total
<b>Total visitors for both facilities</b>	38,238*
<b>Total merchandise sales (in-store, online and Christmas catalogue)</b>	12,258
<b>Total education visitors (school groups) at Dubbo Visitor Experience</b>	255**

\*Dubbo Visitor Experience was closed from 11 August 2021 to 18 October 2021, due to a COVID-19 mandatory closure.

\*\*We do not offer an education program at Broken Hill Outback Heritage Experience.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- After a challenging couple of years for our tourism operations due to COVID-19 restrictions, visitor numbers are starting to build up once again. Easter Sunday 2022 was the busiest day on record at our Dubbo Visitor Experience. We have also seen a pleasing increase in the number of large group bookings. Both our Dubbo and Broken Hill Visitor Experiences were listed as the number one attractions in their location by TripAdvisor.
- We won a \$5.5 million grant through the NSW Government's Regional Tourism Activation Fund to build a new state-of-the-art Outback Heritage Experience at our Broken Hill Base. The new facility will see the base's existing hangar refurbished to tell the Flying Doctor's story through the lens of our aviation expertise. There will also be a focus on telling the stories of First Nations peoples and the pastoral outback. An additional NSW Government grant will assist with the First Nations storytelling component of the new Experience. Planning has been completed and a lot of the design work has been done on the project, which is expected to be completed in late 2023 or early 2024.
- As official charity partner of the inaugural Mundi Mundi Bash, we sold more than \$75,000 worth of merchandise benefiting the delivery of our many healthcare services.
- Throughout the year significant work has been completed on our education programs, including making sure they closely align with school curriculums. The success of this can be measured in strong bookings from school groups in the second half of 2022.
- We received a grant from the NSW Government Creative Capital fund for technology upgrades and the digitisation of our vast archives.





## GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Approximately two thirds of funding for the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) comes from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments.

Without this significant and vital government contribution, many of the communities and people we support would have limited or no access to vital healthcare services, due to their remote and isolated location.

In 2021-22, funding from the Commonwealth Government enabled us to deliver emergency retrieval services. It also enabled us to provide much needed primary health clinics, oral health services and mental health programs in remote communities that would likely not otherwise receive these services due to their distant and isolated locations.

Similarly, funding from the NSW Government enabled us to deliver primary care and chronic disease management programs which help prevent unnecessary hospital admissions. We deliver many of these critical services by flying clinicians and allied health specialists throughout regional and rural NSW, where these services are not available locally.

Funding from the NSW Government has also helped to cover the cost of dental programs across the network, as well as the dental services we deliver in partnership with Maari Ma Aboriginal Health Service, the Far West Local Health District and Corrections Health Service in Broken Hill and Ivanhoe. The Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) also proudly partnered with the NSW Government to deliver vital contracted services to the community, including emergency and non-emergency transport with NSW Health, Ambulance NSW and Ambulance Tasmania.

Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Service) teams also worked collaboratively with Far West Local Health District, Maari Ma and the Commonwealth Government to continue delivering the COVID-19 vaccine program to all communities within and outside our network. This year, we also continued to invest in new staff and equipment to help us face the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also continued to focus on responding to community needs, evolving the way some services were delivered – for example, by providing increasing telehealth sessions.





# Trusts and Foundations

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## Thank you for your generous support.

- Allen Family Foundation
- Bruce and Joy Reid Trust
- Dick and Pip Smith Foundation
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal in partnership with the Australian Government
- Funded by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, through the Eldon & Anne Foote Trust
- Jibb Foundation
- Lady Fairfax Charitable Trust
- Maple-Brown Family Foundation
- McGrath Foundation
- Paul Ramsay Foundation
- Perpetual Foundation – George and Joyce Graves Endowment
- Perpetual Foundation – Rose Margaret Taylor Endowment
- Ruth Marie Sampson Foundation
- Skipper-Jacobs Charitable Trust
- Tenix Foundation
- The Ainsworth Foundation
- The Maggie Butt Foundation
- The Profield Foundation
- The Renshaw Foundation
- The Rydge Foundation
- Zagora Foundation



# Government and Corporate supporters

## Funding Partners



## National Major Partners



## National Community Partner

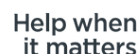
## Corporate and Community Partners



## Commercial Supporters



We would also like to thank the following businesses for their assistance this year:



# How you can help

Our work is not possible without the generosity of individuals, corporations, the government and the community. We thank all the kind supporters of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (South Eastern Section). With your contributions we have proudly served outback Australians for more than 90 years. Help us continue this vital work well into the future by making a donation.

Send your donation to:

Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia  
(South Eastern Section)  
Reply Paid 3537  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 1300 669 569

Email: [supporter@rfdse.org.au](mailto:supporter@rfdse.org.au)

Donate: [flyingdoctor.org.au](http://flyingdoctor.org.au) to make your donation online.



Royal Flying Doctor Service  
SOUTH EASTERN SECTION

#### Bankstown Base

Hangar 276, Airport Ave  
Bankstown Airport NSW 2200  
T: 02 9941 8880

#### Broken Hill Base and Visitors' Centre

Hangar 2, Airport  
Broken Hill NSW 2088  
T: 08 8080 3777

#### Dubbo Base

RFDS Dubbo Hangar  
9R Cooreena Road (Judy Jakins Drive)  
Dubbo NSW 2830  
T: 02 6841 2555

#### Dubbo RFDS Visitor Experience

21 Judy Jakins Drive  
Dubbo NSW 2830  
T: 1800 847 487

#### Sydney Office

Level 5, 418A Elizabeth Street,  
Surry Hills NSW 2010  
T: 02 9941 8859  
E: [enquiries@rfdse.org.au](mailto:enquiries@rfdse.org.au)

## Connect with us



1300 669 569



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