

**ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE TASMANIA**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**DRAWING ROOM, TUESDAY 23 AUGUST 2022**

Good evening. I warmly welcome you all to this reception for staff and supporters of our Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

May I first record an apology from your Chair, Malcolm White. RFDS staff will know he is in outback Queensland, meeting remote RFDS staff and those they serve in outback towns and station properties, in his capacity as a Director of RFDS Australia.

Mention of where Malcolm is brought to mind the wonderful *Flying Doctor Stories* series of books by Bill “Swampy” Marsh. I assume they’re all absolutely true! Including this one: that a doctor was in the outback seeing to a cattle station ringer who’d had his finger cut off in an accident. The doctor asked him where the finger was, and the ringer said he’d put it on a gatepost for safekeeping. Just at that moment, as they both turned to the gatepost, they saw a crow flying off with the finger in its beak!<sup>1</sup>

More seriously, though ...

Malcolm’s visit to outback Queensland tells us much about the wonderful and often difficult work that you have been doing throughout our vast nation, for nearly a century now. It was Reverend John Flynn’s determination to help remote pioneers that led to the establishment in Cloncurry, Queensland, in 1928, of your original predecessor – the Australian Inland Mission Aerial Medical Service.

Expansion of the RFDS to Tasmania in 1960 has meant that rural and remote Tasmania became as well-served as the rest of the country. Our RFDS provides 24-hour emergency services across all Australia’s nearly 7.7 million square kilometres.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *New Great Australian Flying Doctor Stories* by Bill “Swampy” Marsh ABC Books 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Statistic in “Royal Flying Doctor Service, Tasmania Organisation Description”, undated document generated by the RFDS Tasmania and kept in the GHT Patronage file.

We may think that Tasmania's small size means that RFDS activities here are less burdensome than other parts of Australia. However, we have the social and associated medical and other problems unique to our island state.

Specifically, our more decentralised population has meant that many rural Tasmanians have poorer access to health services than city-based states and territories. We also have a raft of other complications, including an older demographic, lower socio-economic circumstances, unhealthy diet, and allied mental health issues.

In my role as Governor, over my first year, I have emphasised my community role which includes health and education among our young people. I engage for example with literacy groups; the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment; Toast for Kids Charity; and B4 Early Years Coalition. It is clear that multiple factors exacerbate the problems in our regional and remote communities.

So, it is gratifying to know that our RFDS has expanded significantly to cover dental outreach and mental illness in rural and remote Tasmania, in addition to a full suite of professional 24/7 medical services. A new mobile dental vehicle sponsored by Woolnorth Renewables has extended the reach to many more isolated communities.<sup>3</sup> I was also pleased to read that recently you expanded your mental health service to support youth aged between 8 and 16 years living on the east and west coast of Tasmania.<sup>4</sup>

RFDS Tasmania relies on fundraising. I cannot emphasise enough the enormous importance of the financial support provided by your supporters, many of whom are here this evening. On behalf of RFDS Tasmania, I thank you very much for your ongoing commitment to this highly dedicated area of our health care system.

Our State Government's faith in our RFDS has been confirmed with last month's co-signing by Premier Rockliff and Malcolm White of a 10-year strategic partnership Memorandum of Understanding.<sup>5</sup> This provides for a minimum of \$300,000 per annum to strengthen the delivery of health services to rural and remote communities.<sup>6</sup>

So – thank you all again. Don and I look forward to chatting with you now.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.flyingdoctor.org.au/tas/help> RFDS Tasmania, accessed 23/08/22

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<sup>5</sup> *Takeoff In the Air, On the Ground*, RFDS Tasmania newsletter Issue 17, Winter 2022, page 3.

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/site\\_resources\\_2015/additional\\_releases/agreement\\_provides\\_certainty-for-royal-flying-doctor-service](https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/site_resources_2015/additional_releases/agreement_provides_certainty-for-royal-flying-doctor-service), accessed 23/08/22