

**ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE TASMANIA MOBILE DENTAL VEHICLE
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
ST MARY'S DISTRICT SCHOOL, TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2020**

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

I am honoured to part of this official launch of the Royal Flying Doctor Service mobile dental vehicle, at St Mary's District School.

School children, aged care residents and families in rural and remote communities throughout Tasmania will now be able to have their dental needs addressed by the RFDS Mobile Dental Program – and in fact the vehicle is on its very first clinical mission here at the School.

This custom-designed truck is the first of its kind in Tasmania: a \$350,000 mobile dental clinic that can simply park and connect to 3-phase power and water to provide an enhanced dental service; while effectively managing infection control and patient comfort to provide vital oral health care to those who need it most.

This enhanced facility offers patients access to a full range of dental treatments, X-ray facilities and a sterilisation bay to reprocess instruments.

The vehicle is also fitted with water tanks, auxiliary power supplies and other features allowing the mobile dental vehicle to remain in-situ for weeks on end if necessary – maximising the number of consultations and treatments.

The community-based service, funded by the Commonwealth Government, targets rural and remote areas of Tasmania where people often face barriers in managing their oral health due to travel to city-based services, because many do not have access to transport or are managing family and work commitments.

By reducing the need to travel long distances to receive essential health services for themselves or family members, concerns of social isolation and financial burden are minimised for a greater number of rural community residents.

As we all know, poor oral health care is a preventable reason for hospital admissions in Tasmania; and is the reason behind a wide variety of chronic health conditions.

Last financial year the RFDS Mobile Dental Team used fixed clinics around the north and north-east of the state to see 1,191 patients over 2,581 visits to deliver 13,423 dental treatments. These statistics will likely increase with the efficient mobile service they are now able to provide to communities.

Since being commissioned and handed over to RFDS Tasmania, the mobile dental vehicle has completed several school-based education days in and around Launceston. And it is now expected to take four to six weeks to treat Fingal Valley school children and acute patients. The vehicle will then travel to various locations across the north-east, north-west and east coast.

As RFDS patron and a supporter of the mobile dental program it was with pleasure that I was able to help activate the fundraising for the dental vehicle by holding a Winter Ball at Government House in June, 2019. Close to \$23,000 was raised thanks to generous support from those who attended.

Woolnorth Renewables, through significant corporate sponsorship and partnership with RFDS Tasmania, brought the mobile dental vehicle to life by funding the development and construction of the vehicle.

Mader International, located in Penguin, Tasmania, worked tirelessly with RFDS Tasmania from the initial stages of the concept phase, creation and manufacture, vehicle handover and training of the RFDS dental staff. John Cruse, Production Manager of Mader International, was instrumental in all phases of the mobile vehicle along with his General Manager, Michael O'Brien.

Support from RFDS interstate sections was also valuable concerning overall design and vehicle layout through testing in their own mobile dental service environment currently in operation.

RFDS Tasmania is dependent upon organisations such as Woolnorth Renewables, along with the government, community organisations, businesses and donors to fund capital projects.

RFDS has a commitment to ensuring that all program funding is attributed directly to the costs of delivering its services – without kind donations and sponsorship from supporters they would not be able to continue the great work that they have been doing for the past 60 years in Tasmania.

For all these reasons, and for all the excellent work that lies ahead of this vehicle and its highly trained operatives, I am honoured to have been asked to be part of this launch.

Thank you.