

ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE 90TH ANNIVERSARY
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
DRAWING ROOM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, TUESDAY 15 MAY 2018

Good evening and welcome to this Government House reception to mark and celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Australia.

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

May I acknowledge among you:

- the Honourable Will Hodgman MP, Premier of Tasmania;
- the Honourable Jim Wilkinson MP, President of the Legislative Council;
- Malcolm White, President RFDS Tasmania, and Cathryn White;
- John Kirwan, CEO;
- Directors and Board Members;
- Mark Cobham, Flinders Council Deputy Mayor;
- Dr Jeff Ayton, Chief Medical Officer Australian Antarctic Division and Dr Jennifer Ayton, UTAS College of Health and Medicine;
- and, most significantly, staff, volunteers, donors and supporters.

There is much to commend your unique business. Many thousands of Tasmanians have in the past, and will in the future, benefit physically and as a result probably also psychologically from your help to them.

We all know the story of the Royal Doctor Flying Service. It is exemplary. But also fallible. Let me quote to you a letter from the year 1997 – just over 20 years ago – from your then Tasmanian President Eric Birtles, to the then Government House Official Secretary Peter Manton –

“Dear Mr Manton”, he wrote, “I refer to letters written when your predecessor Mr David Pitchford was in office relating to the matter of the Governor considering Vice-Regal patronage of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Tasmania.

“You are probably aware that over the intervening period, the existence of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Tasmania has been in some doubt. However, the matter has now been resolved, with the Government granting a contract to the R.F.D.C. Consequently, I would again like to place before the Governor a request to consider patronage ...”ⁱ

Thank goodness that problem was solved, and at the highest level, given the importance and reach of your services.

Here at Government House your 80th Anniversary was celebrated in May 2008 and your 85th in May 2013. And now your 90th.

And in my time as Governor, in order to give further practical effect to this patronage, I have helped facilitate a partnership between RFDS Tasmania and Foodbank Tasmania, providing dental health promotion messages for students through the School Breakfast Program.

The recently established RFDS Tasmania Mobile Dental Care is a wonderful outreach program in primary health care. Tooth decay is Australia’s most prevalent health problem, even though it is largely preventable. Dental conditions are the leading cause of potentially preventable hospitalisations in Tasmania.

And poor dental health and tooth loss can inhibit educational and employment opportunities and social interaction. People in remote and rural locations have greater barriers to oral health services than their metropolitan counterparts, so it makes sense that the focus is on these communities.

However, I would also like to see the RDFS Mobile Dental Care extended to all of our Child and Family Centres, to facilitate access of children and adults in

lower SES areas to dental care to help address the chasm in dental health between the financially needy and those who are better off.

In addition to dental health, there are also primary health care services in five of our rural municipalities: rural health workers for those with chronic conditions and physical health and mental health workers.

RDF also offers educational resources to Primary Schools which are linked to the Australian curriculum.

And at the tertiary level your six scholarships – Fred McKay, Robin Miller, John Flynn, and the three Commercial Travellers Association – are all valuable.ⁱⁱ

I will conclude by saying that although Dick and I would love to participate in the fundraising RFDS Cradle Mountain Trek in early November, our duties here prevent that. However, you can be sure that we will help to promote it – we are both keen bush walkers, and so between that and my patronage of your fine organisation, we'll be ear-bashing whoever we can!ⁱⁱⁱ

Congratulations again to all of you and now please enjoy the reception.

Thank you.

ⁱ Government House patronage file collection.

ⁱⁱ News Corp 13 May 2018 liftout page 15.

ⁱⁱⁱ Liftout op. cit page 20.