

Royal Flying Doctor Service (Western Operations)

Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC, Governor of Western Australia

Tuesday 14 September 2021

I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Whadjuk Noongar people – and pay my respects to their elders past and present

Susie and I are very pleased to welcome you to Government House today.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service is one of the most trusted and valued services in Western Australia. The Flying Doctor provides peace of mind for people in the regional and remote areas of the state – and when there's a medical emergency, it's an absolute saviour.

As you all know, the Flying Doctor Service was started in Queensland in 1928 by Reverend John Flynn.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service is sometimes described as Australia's original start up. It's not a bad comparison – Flynn, the innovator came up with an idea to solve a need – and then managed to get it funded.

Australia has certainly benefitted from that vision and determination. Here in WA, thanks to its wonderful supporters and corporate partners, the Flying Doctor is able to continue to be innovative and to invest in the latest technology so Western Australians can have the best possible service wherever they live.

Recently, the Flying Doctor has been playing a critical role in the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines to regional and remote areas in WA, and elsewhere in Australia.

This work parallels that of pilot and nurse Robin Miller - the Sugarbird Lady - who in the 1960s, flying her own plane, delivered 37,000 polio vaccines into 45 remote communities across the remote Pilbara and Kimberley. She of course became a Flying Doctor pilot and nurse, and her husband Harold Dicks, was a director of the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Technological developments like Telehealth and remote surgery, have made healthcare easier to deliver in some circumstances. However, it's difficult to imagine that technology will ever reduce the need for the Flying Doctor in our very large State.

The future of the Royal Flying Doctor Service today is in our hands. We as a community can all play an active role in shaping what the service will look like into the next century.

I thank, on behalf of all Western Australians, the sponsors and supporters who enable the Flying Doctor to keep maintaining and improving its services - from the large corporate donors to those individuals who give or do what they can to make a difference.

Before I finish I want to acknowledge one of the grass roots supporters who is with us today – Ann McLeish, President of the Narrogin Auxiliary. Ann has done an incredible amount of walking to raise money for the Flying Doctor. Believe it or not, since 2008 she has raised more than \$233,000. How truly amazing – thank you Ann, and once again thank you to all supporters!

ENDS