

Bendigo Advertiser

December 18 2017

Gina Rinehart supports flying doctor



 **SPREADING WINGS:** There are 67 RFDS aircraft located across the country.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service Central Operations (serving SA/NT) has announced the launch of a major partnership with outback icon and one of the nation's largest beef producers, S. Kidman & Co.

In recognition of the \$500,000-plus sponsorship deal, a RFDS 'flying intensive care unit' bearing the S. Kidman & Co logo was unveiled last week by the company's Executive Chairman, Gina Rinehart, at the RFDS' aeromedical base at Adelaide Airport.

The medically-equipped aircraft, the Pilatus PC-12 VH-FXW (Foxtrot-X-ray-Zulu), is one of 67 RFDS aircraft located across the country, many of which serving the outback areas of central and northern Australia where the S. Kidman & Co stations and communities operate.

S. Kidman & Co runs over 160,000 beef cattle across 11 pastoral properties and a feedlot covering 80,000 square kilometres in three states and the Northern Territory. It is owned by Australian Outback Beef, a joint venture of Hancock Prospecting and Shangai CRED.

Hancock Prospecting Executive Chairman, Mrs Gina Rinehart, says she is very pleased to be aligning the S. Kidman & Co brand alongside Australia's leader in aeromedical and primary health care in rural and remote Australia.

"The RFDS has provided a lifeline to the bush communities for almost 90 years.

"It's remarkable to think that in South and Central Australia alone the RFDS airlifts 25 patients every day – over 100 across the country every day," Mrs Rinehart says.

“Our board and our staff are proud to be playing a role in helping to make this happen, and to now have the Kidman brand on a RFDS ‘flying intensive care unit’ that will conduct two missions every day is something we hope will be helpful to many people and help to save lives,” she says.

RFDS Central Operations chairman, Loretta Reynolds, says the impact of S. Kidman & Co.’s direct financial support will be far reaching.

“The RFDS relies on bequests, corporate partnerships and donations to bridge the gap in our operational funding and to finance our capital-raising for the purchase of our aircraft, medical equipment and infrastructure upgrades,” Ms Reynolds says.

“RFDS Central Operations will invest \$50 million in capital over the next five years for the replacement of existing aircraft in our fleet, as well as the introduction next year of the RFDS PC-24 Jet – South Australia’s first purpose-built aeromedical jet – together with medical equipment and infrastructure upgrades,” she says.

“The continued support from the entire community – our ‘ground crew’ of donors, community fundraisers, corporate sponsors and volunteers – will be critical to us meeting our financial challenges, and we’re very delighted to have Mrs Rinehart and S. Kidman & Co on board with us on this very important and critical journey.”

VH-FXZ or ‘Zulu’ as it is known to crews, is the newest \$7 million ‘flying intensive care unit’ to join the RFDS Central Operations fleet located across Adelaide, Port Augusta, Alice Springs and Darwin bases. ‘Zulu’ is the 1500th PC-12 manufactured by Pilatus – and the 20th delivered to RFDS Central Operations who was also the global launch customer of the Pilatus PC-12 in 1995.

In just its first ten weeks of service to the community, ‘Zulu’ has transported 119 patients from 38 rural and remote locations throughout South Australia – and beyond.

The aircraft came into aeromedical service on 1 October this year and has been tasked to airlift injured and critically-ill patients throughout South Australia, from regional centres such as Mt Gambier, Renmark and Port Lincoln, to outback locations as diverse as Coober Pedy, the Nullarbor and Marree on the Birdsville Track.

Its first interstate flight came on October 10; the transfer of a newborn baby from Adelaide to Melbourne for life-saving heart surgery.

- For the next decade VH-FXZ will continue to assist members of the community, delivering services ranging from the:
- • emergency evacuation of the injured or critically-ill from outback communities;
- • aeromedical transfer of patients interstate for live-saving surgery such as organ transplant and heart surgery on newborn babies;
- • delivery of essential primary health care such as GP consultations and immunisation of children during ‘fly-in’ health clinics to remote communities; and
- • transfer of patients from regional and bush hospitals to major hospitals in Adelaide, Alice Springs and Darwin for higher levels of care.