

Submission
No 31

**INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN CENTRAL WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Royal Flying Doctor Service, South Eastern Section
Date received: 26/08/2011

Partially Confidential

Hon Rick Colless MLC
Committee Chairman
Legislative Council
Standing Committee on State Development

**Re: INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL
WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Dear Mr Colless.

The RFDS, South Eastern Section has provided significant health care services to the people of central western and far western New South Wales for many decades. Over this time RFDS services have continually evolved to meet the changing needs of the communities in these regions.

The specific need now, and into the future, is to provide remote residents with services as nearly equivalent as possible to those of their urban counterparts. Given the vast distances involved, this will always be a challenging task. In order to meet the challenge, the RFDS has developed a range of innovative plans to develop and improve the services we provide.

These plans address a number of acute needs including dental and chronic disease care, medical outreach services to towns without permanent medical workforces, and the training of the upcoming medical workforce.

Menindee Medical Housing for the Prevocational General Practice Placements Program

Menindee is a small town in Far West NSW. Medical students from the University of Sydney DRH in Broken Hill are currently assigned to work there for several weeks at a time. The RFDS in conjunction with the UDRH plans to link these students up with RFDS doctors as supervisors and medical staff participating in a proposed Prevocational General Practice Placements Program to be established in Broken Hill. The team formed from these elements will provide structured chronic disease management for the people of Menindee and other towns on an outreach basis. In this way the RFDS will enhance its contribution to the training of future generations of medical practitioners, encourage them to enter a career in a remote area, and at the same time, meet the increasing need for chronic disease care in the region.

The RFDS has applied for a grant from the Regional Development Australia Fund to complete the housing project in Menindee.

Dubbo Medical Housing

Housing of an appropriate standard is extremely important in attracting medical staff to work in regional and remote areas. Dubbo has an acute shortage of suitable housing. The RFDS intends constructing 5 houses in Dubbo to house medical staff working in its aero-medical retrieval operations based in Dubbo.

RFDS medical staff in Dubbo provide services to the RFDS and Dubbo Base Hospital. They also contribute substantially to both the formal training of medical

students at Dubbo Rural Clinical School and to clinical training at Dubbo Base Hospital and on aero-medical retrievals.

Broken Hill Medical Housing

The RFDS has built a number of houses in Broken Hill for medical staff. With the expansion of services there is a need for three additional houses.

Menindee, Dubbo, and Broken Hill Housing

The combined cost of the above three projects and the capital shortfall is documented in the attached letter from Clyde Thomson, ED RFDS South Eastern Section to Mr John Walkom, Chairman of Regional Development Australia.

Dental Program for the Upper Western Sector (UWS) of NSW

There is an acute need for the expansion of dental services in the UWS. The RFDS has received a substantial donation for developing these services to meet that need. The proposal plans to provide a dentist and dental therapist to Bourke, Lightning Ridge, Collerenebri, and Goodooga. Several of these towns have significant Aboriginal populations.

The RFDS requires support for aircraft running costs to make this service a reality.

Enhanced Services from Broken Hill Base

The RFDS has identified a significant need for systematic, multidisciplinary, chronic disease services at clinics currently serviced by medical and other staff from our Broken Hill Base. Such a service will require an increase in medical staffing and the employment of practice nurses to be successful. RFDS current funding arrangements, based on historical service provision not on needs, do not enable the RFDS to develop this model of service delivery.

The RFDS prepared a submission to the Australian Government to develop these services.

Dubbo Base Medical, Practice Nurse, Mental Health, Women's Health Nurse Services

The RFDS has identified a number of towns in the Upper Western Sector that have unmet needs for medical or other services.

The RFDS prepared a submission to the Australian Government to develop these services.

As you can see from the above submissions, the RFDS has been proactive in identifying needs and in developing plans for programs to meet those needs. The Service appreciates the opportunity to put these plans before the Inquiry and is more than happy to provide any further information required by the committee.

Yours sincerely,

Clyde Thomson
Executive Director
RFDS, SE Section
Broken Hill