



# - MEDIA RELEASE -

## Senator the Hon Jan McLucas

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing  
Labor Senator for Queensland



### Flying Doctor delivers new health programs to North Queensland 20 July 2008.

Senator Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, today opened the Royal Flying Doctor Service's new \$5.3-million Cairns base, describing it as a central part of the service's expansion to meet modern health needs in North Queensland.

"The base, the largest in Australia, demonstrates that the Flying Doctor is as important to rural and remote Australia today as it ever was," the Queensland Labor Senator said.

"The Flying Doctor will play a vital role in delivering the Australian Government's commitments to improve health services and health outcomes in remote communities, and for Indigenous Australians."

As well as aero-medical evacuations and patient transfers, RFDS in Queensland provides remote telephone and radio medical consultations, medical supply chests for remote communities, and general practice and community health nurse clinics.

Senator McLucas said the Flying Doctor was playing a growing role in two vital areas, indigenous health and mental health.

Since 2000, under the Regional Health Service Program, RFDS staff from Cairns have provided regular mental health services in indigenous communities. The RFDS is also involved in the "Drop the Rock" program to support local Indigenous communities to address community social and emotional well-being.

The Flying Doctor is part of a consortium receiving \$18.95 million over four years in federal funding to develop a primary health care service delivery hub in Normanton to service the Gulf Communities, and was recently contracted to set up and run four new Wellbeing Centres in the Cape York communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hopevale and Mossman Gorge.

The Wellbeing Centres will provide a comprehensive community-based approach to drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness and family violence.

"The Wellbeing Centres represent a significant innovation for the RFDS and for Indigenous health – providing, for the first time in these rural locations, a comprehensive community-based drug and alcohol service response, rather than a fly-in, fly-out service," Senator McLucas said.

"This initiative delivers in a very real way, on the Government's commitment to Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage – with the assistance of the Flying Doctors."

Senator McLucas congratulated the Queensland RFDS for raising the funds for the new Cairns base, some of which will be recouped from selling the old base.

**Media contact: Mark Davis - 0417 684 096**

