



THE HON WARREN SNOWDON MP

**Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health
and Regional Services Delivery**

THE HON JENNY MACKLIN MP

**Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous
Affairs**

JIM TURNOUR MP

Member for Leichhardt

5 February 2010

New and Improved Aircraft and Mental Health Support Service for Royal Flying Doctor

The Minister for Rural and Regional Health, Warren Snowdon, today launched three multi-million dollar aircraft from the Cairns base of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).

Two Cessna Grand Caravans, worth around \$2 million each, and the refitted Beechcraft Super King Air B200 have been funded by the RFDS through donations and sponsorship.

The Cessna Grand Caravans have commenced service and are being used to transport primary health care professionals to clinics and field days to assist in Far North Queensland.

“These aircraft will help deliver \$13 million in additional services funded by the Rudd Government this financial year for a broader range of primary health care services including mental health, Indigenous health, diabetes education, podiatry, nutrition, dietetics and health promotion. They will also reduce the reliance on charter flights,” Mr Snowdon said.

“This is in addition to the \$11.8 million in core operational funding the Rudd Government provided to the Queensland section of the RFDS this financial year for traditional services to rural and remote locations in the state

“The services include GP clinics, community nurse clinics including child health, the provision of medical chests, telephone consultations and emergency aeromedical evacuations,” Mr Snowdon added.

“Additionally the Rudd Government provided \$2.7 for another Beechcraft Super King Air B200 which began service at the start of the year undertaking aeromedical evacuations and the transfer of patients between hospitals,” added Member for Leichhardt Jim Turnour at the launch.

New Support for Mental Health in Far North Queensland

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny

Macklin, also announced the Royal Flying Doctor Service will receive more than \$1.5 million over three years to deliver mental health services in the community of Aurukun in Cape York.

Ms Macklin said the services will be delivered through the Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) program and will give people living with mental illness, grief and trauma greater access to much needed support.

“Mental illness can have a devastating effect on people's lives leaving them feeling isolated, vulnerable and at risk of drug and alcohol misuse.

"For people in remote locations the sense of isolation is often compounded," Ms Macklin said.

“Personal helpers and mentors work one-on-one with participants to help them achieve their personal goals, for example undertaking some study or having better family relationships”.

The service delivery model for these remote areas has been designed in partnership with Indigenous people to have a greater focus on community development and cultural identity.

“This model recognises and promotes spiritual, cultural, mental and physical healing for Indigenous Australians living with mental illness, trauma or grief” Ms Macklin said.

To help people living with a mental illness re-connect with their culture, new cultural and family brokers from the local community will also be employed to work with the personal helpers and mentors team.

The program also aims to build strong relationships with community elders, and develop the skills of local people to become employed as personal helpers and mentors in their own community. This service is available to people of different ages, including teenagers who are at risk of suicide or self-harm.

The Member for Leichardt, Jim Turnour, said the service would be a big help for people with mental illness in the Aurukun community.

“The new helpers will also help reduce the load on local families and carers of people with a mental illness, who often have little or no time for themselves due to the demands of their caring” Mr Turnour said.

Mr Snowdon said the Royal Flying Doctor Service is a highly valued partner in delivering specialised health services to rural and remote areas.

“The Rudd Government is determined that everyone in Australia can get the health care they need, when they need it – no matter where they live,” Mr Snowdon said.

“The Royal Flying Doctor Service is an important part of achieving that goal. Without the health security the Service provides, much of the inland would be virtually uninhabitable,” Mr Turnour added.

The Australian Government has funded the RFDS since 1932, in one of the longest funding relationships with a charitable organisation since Federation.

Media contact:

Alice Plate (Snowdon) 0400 045 999, Keely Bell (Macklin) 0417 297 157

Belinda Featherstone (Turnour) 0427 737 203