MEDIA RELEASE
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RFDS invests in aeromedical jet for Northern Territory

Central Australians will soon be cared for 24/7 by a permanently configured aeromedical jet following the purchase of a state-of-the-art Pilatus PC-24 aircraft by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).

The RFDS aeromedical jet will almost halve the flying time of long-haul patient evacuations, as well as provide the capacity to transfer three stretchered patients and clinical staff from the NT to any capital city in Australia without refueling.

“The RFDS PC-24 will enable the RFDS to reach patients in need in all corners of the Territory from Alice Springs in less than 90 minutes,” says John Lynch, CEO of RFDS Central Operations.

“At least every other day the RFDS will conduct the emergency evacuation of a critically-ill patient from Alice Springs Hospital to Adelaide or Darwin for specialist care – the RFDS PC-24 will reduce this flight to less than two hours.

To be manufactured in Switzerland, the $10 million medically-equipped jet is scheduled for delivery in 2017/18. RFDS Central Operations has exercised its ‘launch customer’ option to secure one Pilatus PC-24 jet aircraft, and has retained the option to secure a second due for delivery in 2018/19.

The first RFDS PC-24 jet will service both SA the NT then, on arrival of the second RFDS PC-24, one aeromedical jet will be based at Alice Springs and the other in Adelaide to provide enhanced coverage throughout the north-south corridor of Australia.

In the NT alone, the RFDS conducts an average of seven aeromedical flights every day – this daily activity swells to over 100 throughout Australia.

RFDS Central Operations has utilised the Pilatus PC-12 turboprop aircraft exclusively for it operations in South Australia and the Northern Territory since 1995 – it will continue to operate its four medically-equipped PC-12 aircraft in Adelaide, three in Port Augusta and four in Alice Springs.

The market release of the new state-of-the-art Pilatus PC-24 jet will prove a ‘game changer’ for the Flying Doctor according to Mr Lynch.

“The new PC-24 has the versatility and practicality of the PC-12 with the cabin capacity and high performance of a jet. It is certified for our single-pilot operation, and is designed to take-off and land on the harsh dirt airstrips we face in the outback,” Mr Lynch said.
NT Chief Minister Adam Giles said the Territory Government applauded the RFDS’ leadership and on-going investment in the health and well-being of all Territorians.

“The RFDS plays a critical role in caring for Territorians in need and I am thrilled with this expansion of their services,” Mr Giles said.

“The new aeromedical jet will be the only permanently configured aeromedical jet in Central Australia with the capacity to carry three stretcher patients and up to three clinical staff at once.

“The addition of the RFDS PC-24 to the Territory’s disaster response resources will enhance the NT’s capacity to respond quickly and effectively to mass casualty incidents or natural disasters,” he said.

The purchase of the RFDS PC-24 will be funded by fundraising and donations as part of the RFDS’ on-going capital-raising program for the replacement of aircraft, medical equipment and upgrades to its operational facilities.

Its operational costs will be incorporated into the RFDS’ funding agreement with the NT Government for the provision of fixed-wing inter-hospital transfer and aeromedical retrieval services in partnership with NT Remote Health throughout Central Australia.

Oscar Schwenk, Chairman of Pilatus Aircraft Limited, said the company was proud that RFDS Central Operations will operate its new flagship PC-24 Super Versatile Jet in the future – after 20 years of successful operation of the PC-12.

“I would like to express my very sincere thanks to the RFDS for its confidence in our company and in the PC-24,” Mr Schwenk said.

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EDITOR’S NOTE:

- refer overleaf – high resolution JPG images (computer artist impressions) of the interior and exterior of the RFDS PC-24 jet are available upon request.

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Interior: the RFDS PC-24 will be medically-equipped with three stretchered patients.

Exterior: the RFDS PC-24 will be able to take-off on remote dirt airstrips.