

28th April 1999

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Attached is a submission from the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia to assist the Standing Committee on the 'Inquiry into Infrastructure and the Development of Australia's Regional Areas'. The submission was e-mailed on the 28th April 1999 and attached is both a hardcopy and an electronic copy.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (RFDS) provides emergency and primary health care services to the people who live, work and travel in rural, regional and remote locations across Australia. The RFDS has nineteen Bases throughout Australia and so has an extensive Australia wide health and communications infrastructure. The RFDS assists with sustaining regional communities in two main ways;

- the direct impact on the economy by the location of the Bases and,
- the provision of a comprehensive range of health services in a timely manner to these regional communities and the surrounding people.

The existing RFDS infrastructure could be utilised by the Commonwealth and State Governments when implementing programs. This option provides a cost effective alternative to developing separate aerial services. The Commonwealth Government has elected to utilise the RFDS for the Fly In / Fly Out Female GP Scheme. Therefore the majority of the expenditure can be utilised on service delivery and not on the expensive component of aerial transport.

Increasing the RFDS medical network may also assist in the short term to relieve the crisis due to the lack of permanent medical officers on the ground.

I hope this submission assists the Standing Committee with their inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Ryan-Thomas  
National Health Program Manager