National conference attracts flying doctors

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Minister for Health John Elferink experiences life in the pilot seat with the King Air flight simulator used by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) at the 13th National Rural Health Conference.

“Clinicians have been navigating this space for the Royal Flying Doctor Service for decades. The vast land and air of the Territory and the compact area within the planes which save lives of rural and remote Australians,” Mr Elferink said.

“Over 40 per cent of the Northern Territory population live in areas classified as remote or very remote. This is a great opportunity for all attendees to collaborate with many other organisations that work around rural and remote Australia.

“Attendees have all been given the chance to see just how the planes operate, understand the challenges the specialists face when reaching rural and remote areas and get a realistic idea of how everything works.”

Amanda Vanstone, Chair of the RFDS said Western Operations RFDS are launching the first Pilatus PC24 jets in Australia, with delivery expected in 2016/2017.

“The first Pilatus PC24 jet in Central Australia will service the North/South corridor to Darwin, and reduce flight times by half, with a regular 4 hour flight down to 2 hours,” Mrs Vanstone said.

“We are looking to deliver a second jet in 2018 which will allow the RFDS to build on primary health services across Australia, including the Northern Territory.

“Though the RFDS is known for aeromedical retrieval, we are more than a Flying Doctor and provide GP and nurse clinics, telehealth, dental care, mental health programs, mobile patient care and healthy living and wellness programs.”

Minister for Health John Elferink said the Northern Territory Government is delighted to have 20 key note speakers presenting at the Conference and around 210 presentations.

“A number of staff from the Department of Health have been presenting as part of the program, it is great to see them involved in this National event to focus on the health workforce and encouraging people to make Northern Territory Health a career choice,” Mr Elferink said.
“Country people see doctors half as often as city people, specialists a third as often, and mental health services a fifth as often. The Northern Territory Government is very pleased these health professionals are here to focus on people, places and possibilities in rural and remote health.”

The National Rural Health Conference is the nation’s largest event for people who want to improve the health and wellbeing of those who live in rural, regional and remote Australia.

The Conference is an opportunity for rural and remote health consumers, students, clinicians, researchers, policy makers and health service managers to come together to discuss the ways forward for better health and wellbeing in rural and remote areas.

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