

Icons band together with Kidman, RFDS partnership

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A PARTNERSHIP between major outback icon S Kidman & Co and the Royal Flying Doctor Service Central Operations will help keep a 'flying intensive care unit' in the sky.

The \$500,000-plus sponsorship deal will mean the Pilatus PC-12 VH-FXW will bear the S Kidman & Co logo as it serves SA and NT, covering areas where the beef producer operates.

Kidman's executive chairman Gina Rinehart was on site at the RFDS' aeromedical base at Adelaide Airport for the unveiling of the logo and said she was pleased to align the S Kidman & Co brand alongside Australia's leader in aeromedical and primary health care in rural and remote Australia.

"The RFDS has provided a lifeline to the bush communities for almost 90 years," she said.

"It's remarkable to think that in South and Central Australia alone the RFDS airlifts 25 patients every day - over 100 across the country every day.

"Our board and our staff are proud to be playing a role in helping to make this happen, and to now have the Kidman brand on a RFDS 'flying intensive care unit' that will conduct two missions every day is something we hope will be helpful to many people and help to save lives."

RFDS Central Operations chair Loretta Reynolds says the impact of S Kidman & Co's direct financial support will be far reaching.

"The RFDS relies on bequests, corporate partnerships and donations to bridge the gap in our operational funding and to finance our capital-raising for the purchase of our aircraft, medical equipment and infrastructure upgrades," Ms Reynolds said.

RFDS Central Operations will invest \$50 million in capital in the next five years for the replacement of existing aircraft in our fleet, as well as the introduction next year of the RFDS PC-24 Jet - South Australia's first purpose-built aeromedical jet - together with medical equipment and infrastructure upgrades.

"The continued support from the entire community - our 'ground crew' of donors, community fundraisers, corporate sponsors and volunteers - will be critical to us meeting our financial challenges, and we're very delighted to have Mrs Rinehart and S. Kidman & Co on board with us on this very important and critical journey."

VH-FXZ or 'Zulu' as it is known to crews, is the newest \$7 million 'flying intensive care unit' to join the RFDS Central Operations fleet located across Adelaide, Port Augusta, Alice Springs and Darwin bases.

It is the 1500th PC-12 manufactured by Pilatus - and the 20th delivered to RFDS Central Operations who was also the global launch customer of the Pilatus PC-12 in 1995.

In just its first 10 weeks of service to the community, 'Zulu' has transported 119 patients from 38 rural and remote locations throughout SA - and beyond.

The aircraft came into aeromedical service on October 1 this year and has been tasked to airlift injured and critically-ill patients throughout SA, from regional centres such as Mount Gambier, Renmark and Port Lincoln, to outback locations as diverse as Coober Pedy, the Nullarbor and Marree on the Birdsville Track.