

# VH-FVD

## Our Inaugural Doctors

Our three pioneering doctors will always be aboard one of the latest Pilatus PC-12s – with their names emblazoned on the nose of VH-FVD.

Dr John Mickan AM, Dr Robert Cooter AM and the Late Dr John Thompson OAM, all former Port Augusta GPs, were honoured at the commissioning of the new medically-equipped aircraft, the third in the replacement line.

In total, they gave more than 80 years' service from the establishment of the RFDS Port Augusta Base in 1955.

Dr Thompson, who started work at Port Augusta in 1940 and served as the local GP for 50 years, and made the first health clinic flight from the then new RFDS Port Augusta Base, was joined in his practice by Dr Mickan in 1953 and Dr Cooter in 1955.

All three volunteered their services to the Flying Doctor for the next 12 years, attending outback emergencies and looking after the health of people living in rural and remote areas of SA until the RFDS was able to employ its own Medical Practitioners from 1967.

The trio also conducted routine and emergency telephone and radio consultations, and helped to create monthly 'fly-in' health clinics at Andamooka, Oodnadatta and Marree. The latter two are still conducted today by the RFDS.

Dr Thompson, who died in March 2010, aged 95, was one of SA's longest-serving GPs and was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in 1997 for his services to medicine and the community.

Dr Cooter, who returned to Adelaide after 16 years in the northern city, later joined the Board of Central Operations, and gave 32 years of service to the RFDS, including a term as Chairman from 1985 to 1988. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1995.

Dr Mickan spent 22 years at Port Augusta before returning to general practice in Adelaide. In 2010 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for service to the RFDS and for his medical research with Dr Cooter in 1966 into the deaths of 20 children and young people in the region. Their work helped to discover the rare disease amoebic meningitis and its source in water in the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline.



- > Top left: Members of the RFDS Port August Auxiliary, Helen Taylor, Margaret Irvine and Jan and Jim Langdon at the dedication of VH-FVD.
- > Top right: Chris and Vanessa Bouly, who was awarded Life Membership with Central Operations in 2010, at the dedication of VH-FVD.
- > Bottom right: Dr Robert Thompson (son of Late Dr John Thompson), with Dr Robert Cooter and Dr John Mickan with VH-FVD at the Port Augusta Base.