



Media Release

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Succession assured for Australia's premier motoring fundraising events

After 35 years and over \$36 million raised for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Outback Car Trek (OCT) has ensured its future by transferring ownership and management of its premier motoring fundraising events to the Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section (RFDSSE).

It is a bittersweet moment for Bill Patrick, who has fearlessly led the Outback Car Trek, as well as the Bright Smiles Charity Ride and Drive 4x4 The Doc, for nearly 20 years and will retire as Chief Excitement Officer to focus on other pursuits.

“With my 70th birthday fast approaching, it was a natural step to talk with the RFDSSE Team, and for them to take over the three events. The RFDS possess an unsurpassed commitment to rural Australia, and it has been a real privilege to support their vital work. I look forward to a bright future for the events,” Bill Patrick said.

The transfer is effective as of 3 February 2025. The incumbent management team, led by Bill Patrick (Chief Excitement Officer), is committed to a two-year transition period to ensure the Trek's continued success and a seamless transfer.

“The Outback Car Trek is a long-standing and beloved fundraising event. While the Trek actively raises funds for our core work, the ethos of the event, to provide social and economic good in the communities it travels through, is closely aligned to our mission and our commitment to regional, rural and remote communities,” said Greg Sam, CEO, Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section.

Over Greg's decade-long tenure as CEO of the RFDSSE, he has attended many OCT events where he has met with supporters and shared the organisation's gratitude for their efforts. “The Trekkers are a wonderful group of people. They love the wide open spaces, helping outback communities, and they love their cars. It's a very special group.

“We are very excited about the opportunity to work with current management, as well as the Trekkers who have been participating in this event for many years, to protect what is unique about the OCT and to enhance it for the future,” Saranne Cooke, Chair of the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section) said.

“The immense time and effort that goes into organising these large-scale fundraising events is phenomenal. It's a huge testament to Bill's passion and skills that he has been able to run three events every year for so long. Moving forward, the fundraising events will join our portfolio of major campaigns,” Saranne Cooke said.

Plans for this year's Outback Car Trek are well underway with the Trek slated to start in Bathurst, NSW on 29 May and finish in Cairns, Qld on 8 June 2025.

In the meantime, the RFDSSSE will commence recruiting for the next Outback Car Trek event organiser to lead operations during the 2-year transition period.

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About the Royal Flying Doctor Service (South Eastern Section)

The Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section (RFDSSSE) is a not-for-profit charity which provides 24/7 essential lifesaving, emergency and primary healthcare to regional, rural and remote NSW communities.

For 96 years, the RFDS has taken the finest care to the furthest corner. We provide lifesaving outback emergency aeromedical retrievals and hospital transfers, as well as providing over 355,000 occasions of care over the last five years through on the ground GP and nurse appointments, dental care, mental health care, alcohol and other drug counselling, vaccinations, chronic disease management and telehealth.

The RFDS has proudly been named Australia's most reputable charity 13 times by Reprtrak.
[Most Reputable Charity | Royal Flying Doctor Service](#)

About the Outback Car Trek

The Outback Car Trek has raised \$36,000,000 over the past 35 years due to a focus on four key elements;

- Having Fun: and
- Seeing parts of Australia that most people only dream about visiting: and
- Contributing socially and financially to the towns & communities we visit: and
- Raising money for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.