




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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ADJOURNMENT

Royal Flying Doctor Service, Dental Service

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (7.12 pm): In 2013 the QCoal Foundation partnered with the Royal Flying Doctor Service to address the chronic lack of oral health care in regional and remote communities. From this partnership a mobile dental service was born. It comprised two state-of-the-art dental surgeries in a purpose-built semitrailer. During the initial four-year trial the service treated over 8,000 patients and collected vital clinical and operational data to support the model of mobile oral health delivery as an effective, flexible and cost-efficient solution to address the lack of oral care and subsequent broader health impacts in remote communities.

With the support of the Commonwealth, the RFDS Dental Service is now a sustainable mobile health service that continues to deliver the highest standards of care to communities across Queensland. To address the chronic lack of oral health care in regional Queensland, the service delivers dental care from a state-of-the-art semitrailer that includes dental surgeries as well as an OPG facility that allows the dental team to take full mouth X-rays on board. The inclusion of the OPG sets this service apart from others and brings world-class technology to remote communities.

Between 2013 and 2019 the RFDS Dental Service visited 24 rural and remote communities in Queensland and provided over 15,000 patient visits. During these visits, over 76,000 dental treatments and procedures were provided. During that period the service produced \$15 million of economic and social benefits to patients.

A 2021 BDO report found that for every \$1 in funding provided to the RFDS Dental Service, \$1.80 of economic and social benefit was returned to the community. The report supported our long-held view that this model of mobile dentistry is the most effective approach in a rural and remote setting. The data further quantified the longer term benefit to the broader health system of \$800,000 in economic benefit from avoided GP and hospitalisation costs alone.

A 2023 study by BDO found that the regular scheduled visitation by the RFDS Dental Service directly into communities has overcome key barriers for regional and remote communities; that is, mobile service delivery overcomes accessibility, government and philanthropic support overcomes affordability and the reputation of the service for quality care ensures continued high rates of community uptake and overcomes any emotional barriers to visiting the dentist. This study reinforces the true value of the dentist service model.

The 10-year anniversary will be celebrated with the Collinsville community on 13 June this year and with other stakeholders during the year. I commend this service for the work they do in our rural and regional communities. I also say that there are plenty of examples where they have actually saved people's lives because of the diagnosis performed in those semitrailers.