AUSTRALIAN-FIRST FLIGHT SIMULATOR TO BE BUILT FOR RFDS

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Training medical professionals for in-flight care on board the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) has taken a giant leap forward, with the announcement on Friday of an $18 million facility at the service's base in Dubbo.

RFDS chief medical officer Dr Randall Greenberg believes the one-of-a kind facility will bring great benefits to rural healthcare in Australia.

"We can practice doing emergency simulations in the plane, which is very different to by the bedside," Dr Greenberg said.

The new multi-million dollar training base will be finished by the middle of 2017, with construction due to start next month.

The facility is the end result of a long-held dream by the RFDS committee in Dubbo, led by president Terry Clark.

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"I have had a dream that we would have a state-of-the-art visitor facility," Mr Clark said.

"To marry that to an aeronautical training facility and a medical training facility all in one is just phenomenal."

Simulator brings training home

Currently, RFDS pilots are trained in North America or in other countries, due to no flight simulator for the Beechcraft King Air B200 — the plane used by the service — being available in Australia.

With the development of the new simulator, Dubbo will become a hub for training pilots not just from Australia, but from many parts of the world.

It will also provide invaluable medical training to staff across Australia.

"We're hoping we can use it for other clinical staff," Dr Greenberg said.

"It's a great tool for training the young doctors and explaining that this is what happens in a medical emergency in the air."

The local RFDS Community Group raised $1.1 million, with the remainder of the project's funding coming from the NSW Government.

Funding of $2.5 million was announced on Friday by New South Wales Premier Mike Baird.

Israel-based contractor Elbit Systems, an Israeli high technology company, will invest more than $10 million in the project.

RFDS south east chief executive officer Greg Sam said Dubbo City Council had supported the RFDS for many years and its support for the project had been essential.

"We are delighted to be able to further deliver on the promise made a few years ago by the RFDS SE board to increase facilities and services at Dubbo," Mr Sam said.

"We very grateful to all those involved whose support has enabled this new facility."

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