THE past 12 months have seen several capital infrastructure projects delivered and some new fields of endeavour introduced to our services. I am pleased to report that we have opened our ninth base in Roma. The patient transfer facility will provide improved patient comfort for those being airlifted by visiting RFDS aircraft to and from tertiary hospitals and specialist services.

This year we also purchased two new B200 King Air aircraft, which will be located at our Mount Isa and Cairns bases.

To enhance our aeromedical capabilities, recently we also signed a purchase agreement with Hawker Pacific for two B350C King Airs. These new aircraft have increased payload and flight duration capacity and are in addition to the two B200s purchased this year.

In October we completed the construction of a new Charleville base and hangar facility to consolidate our aviation, medical and administration teams into one central location.

As part of this redevelopment we were also delighted to have opened a brand new visitor centre to continue to perpetuate our history and add an RFDS flavour to the outback tourism market.

Our Rockhampton Base is also set to expand with the construction of a new patient transfer facility which we anticipate will be operational in the first quarter of 2015. Next year also marks the 20th Anniversary of operations at both our Rockhampton and Brisbane bases.

Visitors to Charleville will now be able to tour the RFDS Visitor Centre, which celebrates the long association between the RFDS and southwest Queensland.

The centre was opened late last month by Queensland Governor Paul de Jersey and his wife Kaye.

The de Jerseys were joined at the opening by Murweh Shire Mayor Denis Cook, RFDS CEO Nino Di Marco and members of the Vickers and Affleck families which both have long and close associations with the RFDS.

Mr Di Marco said the Flying Doctor Service this year marked 86 years of operation and 71 years since the first Charleville base opened in 1943.

“The self-guided exhibit, which includes a number of interactive and audio visual features, will take visitors on a journey from the humble beginnings of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, and its association with the Australian Inland Mission, through to the present day operations of this vital outback medical service,” Mr Di Marco said.

The exhibit, on the newly designated John Flynn Way, named in honour of the Flying Doctor’s visionary founder, Reverend John Flynn, was designed by Brandi Projects, which sourced and restored a number of artefacts, including historical radio and medical equipment that would have been used by RFDS doctors based in Charleville in the past.

Murweh Shire Council mayor Denis Cook said the tourist attraction would be a highlight for history buffs and visitors to the region.

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Long-awaited patient transfer unit opens at Roma

By PENELope ARTHaRt

SICK and injured patients waiting to be transferred out of Roma for medical treatment via the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) can now wait in the comfort of a patient transfer facility at the Roma Airport.

The long overdue facility, which includes a hanger to house the Roma-based King Air B200 aircraft used by the RFDS, was officially opened by the federal Member for Maranoa Bruce Scott in late August.

RFDS Queensland section CEO Nino DiMarco also attended the opening where he told the waiting crowd that the new facility would be an asset to the local community.

“With RFDS and Careflight both located at the airport, Maranoa residents can feel a high degree of community safety and confidence in the effectiveness of medical evacuations and services,” he said.

Meanwhile work is well underway on a new patient transfer facility which is due to open in Rockhampton early next year.

RFDS Queensland section CEO Nino DiMarco said the Rockhampton RFDS facility was only possible because of the generous support of the local central Queensland community.

“The RFDS greatly appreciates the generosity of supporters across central Queensland and our major funding partners Rockhampton City Council, Aurizon Community Giving Fund, Stanwell Power Station Community Fund, The John Villiers Trust, the RFDS Rockhampton Auxiliary and Rotary,” he said.

“The tremendous support for this project will provide a lasting legacy that will make a difference to the life of many patients and their loved ones, as the new facility will allow us to separate our aeromedical operations from our maintenance activities, leading to improved safety, patient care and working environment for our Rockhampton-based team, and the adoption of a new aircraft maintenance system,” he said.

Rockhampton Mayor Margaret Strelow said the opening of the new patient transfer facility was great news for the Rockhampton community and for the RFDS.

Federal Member for Maranoa Bruce Scott and RFDS CEO Nino DiMarco officially opened the new RFDS Roma hanger and patient transfer facility at the Roma Airport in August.

Mariana Regional Council mayor Robert Laughlin said the new facility would be an asset to the local community.

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By PENELOPE ARTHUR

T AFE at the RFDS Mount Isa base are flying high this week with the addition of a new 2014 model Beechcraft B200 King Air to their fleet.

Nicknamed Cooee, the plane became operational on Monday and will be Mount Isa’s primary retrieval aircraft.

RFDS Queensland section CEO Nino Di Marco said Cooee would play a pivotal role in delivering medical care across north-west Queensland over the next decade.

“Last year our Mount Isa based aeromedical crews airlifted close to 900 patients, flying around 77,000km in the process,” he said.

“Cooee can expect a similar workload, covering a vast geographical area from its operational hub, ranging from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the north; to the west across the Northern Territory border; to the remote outback to towards the coast, including Townsville,” Mr Di Marco said.

Mr Di Marco said the new Beechcraft was at the forefront of navigation and technology and equipped with the most up-to-date navigation and flight management systems.

“This advanced technology provides early warning of other air traffic and allows the aircraft to fly at altitudes up to 10,000 feet, using less fuel and travelling at greater speeds,” he said.

“Additionally, the enhanced radar are extremely important to us as a not-for-profit organisation, and provide long-term cost savings, operations team with more flexible transport options, and provide long-term cost savings, which are extremely important to us as a not-for-profit organisation,” he said.

The name Cooee was nominated by the winner of the recent “name the plane” competition run by Ergon Energy Retail statewide. It was chosen because it is universally identified as a shout to attract attention or a call for help, synonymous with the bush and the invaluable services the RFDS provider.

The RFDS has also ordered two new Beechcraft King Air 350C heavy weight aircraft – a plane large enough to fly from Cairns to Brisbane without refuelling.

The RFDS is the first of two King Air 350C heavy weight model aircraft in the RFDS fleet. In April 2015 and will undergo a comprehensive medical fitness out before being incorporated into the RFDS’s existing aviation fleet.

The first of two King Air 350C heavy weight aircraft will arrive on Australian soil in August and will undergo a comprehensive medical fitness out before being incorporated into the RFDS’s existing aviation fleet.

The RFDS Queensland section CEO Nino Di Marco said the new King Air 350C heavy weight model offers an array of valuable features, particularly for aero-medical missions including a uniquely built-in airstair and cargo door and offering an increased payload of 635kg.

The large cargo door is beneficial for the RFDS aero-medical activities, as it will allow improved access for loading and unloading of patients as well as medical equipment required to be on board.

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The enhanced payload capability of 1,400 pounds will enable us to better fulfil our patient transport obligations in what is a dynamic and ever-changing aero-medical environment,” he said.

“New additions to our fleet of Beechcraft aircraft will be immensely beneficial to our patients both in terms of their comfort and the timeliness of our operations. The increased flying distance of the King Air 350s will provide our flight operations team with more flexible transport options, and provide long-term cost savings, which are extremely important to us as a not-for-profit organisation.”

The RFDS Queensland section CEO Nino Di Marco said he was eagerly awaiting the arrival of the new planes.

Healthy, happy and ready for Santa

J ED Postlewaite was just two days old when doctors at the Mackay Hospital discovered he had a twisted bowel.

Jed and his parents, Nicole and Ash, were terrified by the news and asked what the diagnosis meant for Jed.

“We were told that he needed emergency surgery, or else there was a real danger that a large part of his gut would need to be cut out. Worst of all, Jed might suffer a life-threatening bowel perforation, which is a potentially fatal complication,” she said.

Unfortunately the Mackay Hospital was not equipped to carry out such major surgery.

Jed needed to get to a neonatal intensive care unit as soon as possible, but the nearest one was a four-and-a-half-hour drive away in Townsville.

“Jed’s life depended on rapid action, so as soon as Jed’s condition was confirmed, Mackay Hospital put out a request for an RFDS aero-medical team to transport him to Townsville.”

On duty that day was flight nurse Anita Robertson. Like all RFDS Nurses, Anita not only had years of ICU training, she was also a qualified midwife, and knew that Jed needed to get to surgery quickly:

“When a little baby has a bowel problem like that, you don’t sit around. They can deteriorate quite quickly, so you’ve got to get to work fast,” Anita said.

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