



Information bulletin

Evaluation of the RFDS Aeromedical Nurse Practitioner Service trial

BACKGROUND

The Royal Flying Doctor Service – Queensland Section (RFDS) engaged Healthcare Management Advisors and Kris Batty Consulting (HMA/KBC) to evaluate the trial of the *RFDS Aeromedical Nurse Practitioner Service (the Service)*.

The Service will trial the use of nurse practitioners to service requests that fall in between requests that are suitable for flight nurse only and flight nurse plus doctor. The nurse practitioner will provide clinical support for RFDS flight nurses and reduce the use of doctors for tasks where the doctor's skill set is not required. Three nurse practitioners will be engaged for the trial; all will be a qualified midwife able to support RFDS flight nurses with or without midwifery.

The objectives of the Service are to improve efficiencies across the aeromedical retrieval network, through better use of medical officer time, specifically:

- Reduce the need to task medical officers when the task is out of scope for a flight nurse, but the doctor's skill set is not required.
- Reduce the need to task the rotary wing medical officer when their skill set is not required, but the fixed wing medical officer is on another task.
- Improve response times using fixed wing planes when the fixed wing medical officer is on another task.

The nurse practitioner model will also enable two additional nursing positions within the current RFDS nursing career path: Nurse Practitioner and non-Midwife Flight Nurse.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The evaluation is outcomes focused and will include formative and summative evaluation reports. The overarching evaluation questions are:

- Did the service achieve its objectives?
- What were the enablers and barriers to implementation?
- What has been the impact of the nurse practitioner role on flight nurses (e.g. career path possibilities, mentorship)?

The evaluation will also include a cost effectiveness analysis of the service costs compared to the observed benefits of the program (and, where possible, the cost savings compared to current business as usual).

The scope of the evaluation is contained to the RFDS activities for the Aeromedical Nurse Practitioner Service trial, and (if possible) the broader Queensland Retrieval Service system costs in relation to tasking of flights will be considered.

PROJECT METHOD

The evaluation will be undertaken in five stages, as follow:

- **Stage 1: Project initiation** to define the scope of works and the key objectives (July 2023).
- **Stage 2: Evaluation framework** will be developed including a program logic, evaluation areas and key questions (July 2023).
- **Stage 3: Interim evaluation report** will be prepared based on consultation with RFDS staff, the nurse practitioners, including flight nurses and doctors, and analysis of RFDS performance indicator data. The interim evaluation will focus on learnings that can be used to improve the model of care. (February 2024).

- **Stage 4: Final evaluation report** will be prepared based on consultation with RFDS staff, RFDS performance indicator and financial data (October 2024).
- **Stage 5: Final report update** based on quantitative data available at the 18 month time point (February 2025).

KEY CONTACTS

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