

The RFDS Healthy Living Program aims to reduce chronic heart disease in Outback SA.

The vision of the RFDS Healthy Living Program is: “Outback Folks: happy, fit ‘n’ healthy”. Unfortunately population data indicates that those living in remote areas have a shorter life expectancy than those living in urban areas, and Aboriginal people in remote areas have a significantly shorter life expectancy than urban Australians.

The RFDS Healthy Living Program aims to address this discrepancy by reducing the incidence of lifestyle-related chronic diseases by increasing physical activity and improved dietary intake of remote South Australians.

“The RFDS Healthy Living Program takes a community development approach; it focuses on encouraging increased physical activity and building leadership capacity in areas of physical activity and healthy cooking and eating,” says Jenny Bourne, the program’s coordinator.



The RFDS Healthy Living Program at the Marree Cricket Ground with Marree residents, and His Excellency Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSC RANR Governor of SA, August 2008

The RFDS Healthy Living Program delivers monthly fitness coaching to remote towns, in group and individual settings.

“We aim to be available to many people as we can who live in the RFDS Central Operations Primary Health footprint of South Australia,” says Jenny.

“This area includes Oak Valley and Yalata in the far west, across northern SA to Oodnadatta, Marree and the northern Flinders Ranges.”

The RFDS Healthy Living Program has two part-time lifestyle trainers, Dylan Hunter and Lisa Lawton who are referred to as the ‘Flying Lifestyle Trainers’. They provide instruction and advice in the areas of healthy living, lifestyle change, fitness instruction, weight loss and chronic disease prevention and management.



Dylan Hunter and Lisa Lawton, Physical Activity and Lifestyle Trainers for the RFDS Healthy Living Program

Dylan has a Degree in Human Movement, and enjoys the opportunity that this role provides him to travel and to meet new people and to assist them to improve their health and fitness.

As a Lifestyle Trainer, it is my job to visit various remote areas, in order to educate and promote healthy living as well as encouraging people to be more active. Through monthly visits and on-going support via phone and email, I am able to provide information and coaching to assist people with healthy diet and exercise and the incredible benefits these two aspects bring to a persons life.

Many of the communities that we visit have little or no exercise equipment therefore, it is my job to show people that gym equipment is not necessary to be active and to exercise. Creative

thinking and the use of surrounding resources such as benches, chairs and stairs are sufficient for basic strength training.

We provide exercise programs ranging from one to one personal training, to group circuits or simply walking groups. However, before any form of physical activity is undertaken by an individual, they must complete a pre-screen form so that the trainer can determine if there are any medical or health issues that need to be taken into account or if a client should first speak to their doctor.

Furthermore, various body composition measurements are taken such as height, weight, body fat percentage, hip and waist girth and also blood pressure. These variables are continually measured over time to track each individual's progress throughout the program and to provide evidence of changes that diet and exercise have on the human body. This monitoring also assists people to gauge their progress towards their desired goals.



Dylan Hunter instructs Penong community members in a fitness circuit in the local hall. This group get together twice per week to do their circuit.

The RFDS Healthy Living Program is very fortunate to have 10 years funding (2007 – 2017) from the Li Ka Shing Foundation.

“It is only through generational change in behaviour and attitude towards lifestyle that we will influence a measurable difference to life expectancy” says Dr John Setchell, RFDS General Manager of Health Services RFDS Central Operations.

Fifty years ago the Royal Flying Doctor Service provided the HF radio system for the School of the Air to broadcast lessons to students in the Outback. Now the School of the Air and RICE (Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise) are providing their Web Based Learning Platform Centra, to the RFDS Healthy Living Program to provide fitness and lifestyle instruction and advice to individuals and families living in the remote and isolated areas of SA.

“I think it's great that the internet enables people in remote areas to connect up to do activities such as fitness instruction together,” Jenny says.

The RFDS Healthy Living Program is instrumental in the development and on-going support of Outback Community Foodies – volunteers from our remote communities that take on a peer education role around healthy eating.

“Our Outback Community Foodies come from places like Oodnadatta, Marree, Copley, Nepabunna and Coober Pedy. They are wonderful at providing basic nutrition information to their extended families and communities, reaching people that do not usually source mainstream health information,” says Jenny.



Outback Community Foodies are from Oodnadatta, Marree, Coober Pedy, Copley and Port Augusta. This group graduated in June 2008



Children from Leigh Creek Area School, Marree Aboriginal School and School of the Air with Healthy Living Program Staff and Ambassadors October 2009.

Ambassadors to the RFDS Healthy Living Program are Adelaide Crows Footy player Brett Burton and ETSA Contax Netball Team, these sporting heroes are in a fantastic

Once a year RFDS Healthy Living Program staff and Ambassadors travel to a remote community to hold a Healthy Living Carnival. The carnival takes the form of several stations through which groups of children move learning about the properties of energy, energy in food, physical activity as energy and energy balance.



HLP Ambassador and AFL star Brett Burton (Adelaide Crows) with Dr John Setchell (RFDS) showing children how to measure their heart rate, Leigh Creek 2009.



HLP Ambassador Bianca Reddy (ETSA Contax Netball Team) show some boxing moves to illustrate energy transfer. October 2009 Leigh



ETSA Contax Netball Team Members Lauren Martinez, Amanda Martin, and Jane Fitzgerald (Captain ETSA Contax) with Jenny Bourne (RFDS HLP coordinator) with the Li Ka Shing badged RFDS aeroplane