Case Study

Royal Flying Doctor Service

In Australia, the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) is renowned for providing medical facilities to the remote areas of the country, with 21 bases spread around our vast brown land. The Broken Hill base is a part of the South Eastern Section of the RFDS and services a large area of the state of New South Wales and her neighboring states. Two-way radio has played an essential part in the history of the service, especially the well-known ‘pedal wireless’, a HF Radio adapted to operate from a small generator powered by the operator pedaling, as if on a bicycle. These radios were the lifeline of medical support for many years. Nowadays satellite services and even cellular phones, in some areas, have replaced them.

Some seventeen years after the installation of a Zetron 4010 system with a combination of HF, VHF and UHF radios, it was decided it was time to upgrade the system.

Gary Oldman, IT Manager for the South Eastern section had been impressed with the reliability of the original Zetron system and easily considered another Zetron product for the upgrade.

Working closely with Zetron, AA Radio designed the solution to install the new Zetron DCS5020 system with three operator positions, plus HF, VHF and UHF radio channels, local telephone connection and interface into the base Public Address system for staff alerts.

In consideration of the remote nature of the RFDS operations, AA Radio designed the system to include tabbed screens’ with the main operators console screen at the front, coupled with a ‘help file’ on a second tabbed screen. This help screen contains the full operating instructions for the system, so any operator (either now or in the future) has the system operating instructions just a simple click away.

Designed to use touch screen technology; the system is extremely flexible and user friendly.

The Zetron DCS5020 system will also allow the future addition of parallel control of radio systems from other RFDS bases, such as the main operating base at Port Augusta in South Australia. By using the IP connectivity of the RFDS WAN system, radio networks can be paralleled and operations controlled remotely.

The story of the Royal Flying Doctor Service is remarkable, and is a continual reminder on how innovation is required to overcome the tyranny of distance in Australia. There is no doubt the RFDS plays a necessary and critical role in Australia. The Broken Hill base sees over 13,000 patients, conducts over 1600 clinic sessions and transports over 900 patients by air in one year alone, and all from a service area of 640,000 sq km.

Some 700 kilometers away from Broken Hill, the Systems Design and Project Delivery Units of AA Radio have, yet again shown that our philosophy of placing the operational and business requirements of our customer first, has resulted in the right solution.

Ian Miller, the AA Radio Project Manager stated “We are very pleased to be able to provide the Flying Doctor service with a modern console system to enable them to continue the fine tradition of supporting people in the remote areas of Australia.”