



SouthCare heli change

THE Snowy Mountains region have often relied on the services of the Snowy Hydro SouthCare helicopter to assist with transporting injured people to hospital. Snowy Hydro have also been a fantastic supporter of all local mountain communities with various sponsorships, so it will be a change to see a helicopter flying to the mountains this year with new branding.

SouthCare Trust CEO Carol Bennett penned a letter as changes are being made to how the helicopter operates.

Patients often tell stories of just what it means, in moments of major trauma, to hear the iconic sound of the Snowy Hydro SouthCare rescue helicopter coming to lend assistance. The sound is a reminder to us all of how fragile life can be – accidents and illness can and do happen at any time and to anyone.

While the shock, sadness and trauma of those requiring assistance is always difficult, it is always uplifting to see how Canberrans and our close communities repeatedly step forward to support those in need. The Canberra Bushfires, for instance, highlighted the generous community spirit of Canberrans and our close neighbours.

Since October 1998, SouthCare has enjoyed the strong support of our region. The Snowy Hydro SouthCare helicopter, affectionately known as 'Charlie', is a familiar sight and sound across the region providing life-saving aero-medical and rescue services. It's a community resource on call 24 hours a day, every day of the year and it's vital to our region's one million residents and five million visitors each year.

Charlie and her crew can tell almost 7000 stories of people in situations of dire need being provided critical medical assistance.

The service has received overwhelming community support over the past 18 years. It's because of that support the ACT and NSW governments now see this as an essential service and have committed to fully fund core operations without the reliance on community fundraising. It's a unique and outstanding success story.

On April 2, a new era begins for Canberra and the surrounding region with the arrival of a brand new state of the art, purpose built, AW139 helicopter. The aircraft will be one of eight that will respond to missions across Southern NSW operating from four bases, Bankstown, Wollongong, Canberra and Orange. The aircrafts deliver the latest in performance, safety and innovation – assisting ACT Ambulance helicopter doctors and paramedics to reach patients in remote areas, faster than ever before. Each aircraft will be fitted with the latest aviation and safety technology, including single engine performance and a greater range, night vision technology and a larger working space for the medical crew in the rear of the aircraft. The facilities on board enable life-saving operations and major medical interventions to be carried out immediately.

A bigger and better aero-medical service is great news for our region. The commencement of this new and enhanced service is not only a reflection of the crew's outstanding professionalism, but it is a reflection of our community spirit.

The SouthCare Trust is grateful to our sponsorship and naming rights partner of 15 years, Snowy Hydro Ltd, and to all our sponsors, donors, volunteers and supporters who have helped the service reach this milestone.

Few charities fully achieve their mission. The SouthCare Trust has, thanks to so many people over so many years. Take a bow Canberra and our regional NSW community.

Carol Bennett, SouthCare Trust CEO