

Jet power for the flying doctors

When Shauna Parore, a member of the Regional Participation team at Argyle Diamonds, was expecting her baby daughter, she suffered a serious pregnancy complication involving liver and kidney failure, so needed to be taken to a major metropolitan hospital.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) came to the rescue by transporting her from the south of Western Australia to Fremantle Hospital in Perth.

Said Shauna: "Without the flying doctor service my daughter and I wouldn't be here today. For people living in remote communities the RFDS is our lifeline."

Not surprisingly Shauna is especially

delighted that RFDS services are now enhanced by the introduction of a jet plane – the new Rio Tinto Life Flight – which can transport patients to hospital in half the time.

Sam Walsh, chief executive Iron Ore and Australia, said: "Rio Tinto is proud to support Australia's first and only RFDS operated jet which will deliver faster and more effective services in helping critically ill people in regional and remote Western Australia.

"The RFDS has touched the lives of so many of our employees and their families, and while we hope they won't ever need the Rio Tinto Life Flight jet, knowing it's there will provide immense peace of mind."

Rio Tinto has contributed A\$5 million to the provision of the jet, which marks the biggest step change in aero medical retrieval since the introduction of Australia's first Royal Flying Doctor Service in 1928. The Rio Tinto Life Flight jet can fly non stop from any location in Western Australia to Perth in approximately three hours and undertake interstate transfers without refuelling.

The RFDS has been transporting 6,600 patients annually in Western Australia in its fleet of other planes. The Rio Tinto Life Flight jet is expected to handle some 500 emergencies in its first year of operation.

Dr Stephen Langford, RFDS Western Operations medical director, said: "The plane is the only permanently configured aero medical jet anywhere in Australia with the capacity to carry three stretcher patients and up to three clinical staff at once.

"It can also undertake faster flying doctor retrievals from offshore locations and has the advantage of a dedicated aero medical layout to help us treat and care for almost any patient."



Ready for take off: Rio Tinto executives join Sam Walsh (right) for the debut of the Hawker 800XP2 jet.