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# Drive for flying doctors



**Rewarding:** RFDS nurse manager Katherine Isbister travels with a patient in a King Air B200.

AN army of health professionals caring for up to 270,000 remote and regional Australians needs to expand, sparking a Royal Flying Doctor Service recruitment drive.

The RFDS is on the hunt for new senior regional officers to find more effective and efficient service delivery.

The largest RFDS presence is in Queensland, where about 400 staff (60 per cent of whom are women) service the state, enjoying flexible working arrangements where possible.

Women are highly regarded as doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. However, RFDS general manager of

**Debra Bela**

human resources, Tracey Green, says more female pilots are wanted. The main employment groups in the RFDS include the primary health care professions in allied health of psychologists, social workers and community support workers. There is a large administrative area, including finance and marketing, as well as nurses, medical officers and pilots.

A charter plane picks up GP Louise Russell from Rolleston, central Queensland, to hold clinics across central and

western Queensland in the Rural and Remote Women's GP Service, run by the RFDS. It's a service to which 22 GPs contribute on a part-time basis and recruitment of experienced practitioners is ongoing.

Recruitment can be a challenge, but Ms Green says it is widely regarded that a contribution to the RFDS goes far in cementing a health professional's reputation.

"The service we deliver is as basic and as fundamental as telephone connectivity or internet connectivity. It is crucial for people in the bush."

For more information visit [flyingdoctor.org.au](http://flyingdoctor.org.au)

# Think outside of the box to get into public relations

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My favourite definition is 'the managed communication between an organisation and its publics'.

If you are a public relations practitioner, you will most likely work on behalf of an organisation, like a government department, charity or company – or perhaps an individual – think politician or celebrity.

The public relations consultant's role is to look after that organisation or person and the relationship with stakeholders who are important to them.

Good, two-way communication between an organisation and its public is key to influencing that audience into achieving success.

The art to good communication is not just about getting your message out, but also about listening to the audience and responding thoughtfully and strategically.

Never has this been more important than today with the advent of social media which is changing the way we communicate.

A good public relations professional will spend a lot of time listening to their clients, finding out ways to communicate, in a methodical manner, determining what the clients want to achieve, assessing risk and then working out ways of managing a crisis, raising awareness, collecting feedback and providing advice on the way forward.

You need to be a creative, think-outside-the-box type of person that has the discipline to think critically.

As a public relations consultant you need to enjoy writing, not in a poetic sense, but to convey your message effectively, using simple and concise language that is able to compel a journalist to find out more.

It also helps immensely to have a strong interest in news and general and current trends.

Just today I received an e-newsletter from a magazine citing an example of good PR and PR gone wrong.

The good PR was a statement issued by Peninsula Hotels which have taken a definitive stand on ceasing to serve shark fin in all of its group operations effective January 1, 2012.

Thumbs up to them and thumbs down to the head of a PR company who mailed – and killed – 50 goldfish in a PR stunt gone wrong.

The consultancy mailed out 55 goldfish in a bowl accompanied by a note saying: 'Be the big fish in a small pond and come and test the water'. This was a promo to encourage media agencies to promote South Australia. Perhaps if the fish had lived, it would have been perceived and received

positively – that is a risk you might sometimes take.

So, you want to get into public relations. How do you do it? There is no right or wrong way.

Many people, like myself, make the move across to public relations from another field. There are many ex-journalists, teachers and lawyers for example who have made excellent public relations professionals.

You might start off by doing a TAFE course or perhaps working your way up in a PR firm.

By far the best recognised career path in public relations is to undertake a Bachelor's Degree in public relations.

This will supply the graduating student with a good general skill base in public relations and broader knowledge of where their profession fits into the big picture of business, government and other sectors.

Many students choose to undertake an internship during their studies that provides a practical insight into the profession as well as invaluable experience that comes to the fore when it is time to apply for a job.

Starting salaries are about \$30,000 for a graduate and can be about \$100,000 per annum for an experienced professional.

Also good advice is to join your industry's peak body or association.

In Australia, the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) is the PR industry's peak membership body that provides the student or professional with an opportunity to speak with fellow communicators, share knowledge, maintain industry standards, up skill and demonstrate commitment to ethical standards.

For further information visit [pria.com.au](http://pria.com.au)



**As a public relations consultant you need to enjoy writing, not in a poetic sense, but to convey your message effectively, using simple and concise language that is able to compel a journalist to find out more."** –Pip Miller, PR consultant