VKS-737 Media Release – Changes to RFDS HF Operations in QLD & WA

The VKS-737 Radio Network and the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (Western Operations and Queensland Section) have established formal agreements in relation to the future direction of RFDS HF communications by providing HF Selcall services from the 1st October 2010.

The existing RFDS base station equipment utilises Voice Grade Dedicated Lines (VGDL) to connect between their operators and the transmitter and receiver sites. Due to Telstra, the provider of these lines, decommissioning these lines from the end of September 2010, this will no longer be possible. The RFDS has taken active steps to find an alternative solution to maintain the network for the future and commenced discussions with VKS-737 as part of this process.

The majority of emergency calls to the RFDS are via telephone, however several HF Selcall calls via the VKS-737 radio-telephone interconnects to RFDS at Broken Hill and Jandakot (this option has been available for many years via all VKS-737 bases) are received every year

As part of the agreement RFDS operators will be trained in the operation of the VKS-737 equipment and will have full access to all bases just the same as VKS-737 operators, allowing them to make outgoing calls as well as receiving incoming emergency calls.

RFDS operators will also have access to the V-Rep system to allow them to access information including recent logs should the emergency calls originate from a VKS-737 subscriber.

Another part of the agreement is that VKS-737 will install additional base stations at some existing RFDS sites and will monitor both VKS-737 frequencies and the RFDS frequencies of the particular base for selcalls.

Licence applications are presently with the Australian Communications and Media Authority for additional base stations to be installed at Carnarvon, Derby, Meekatharra and Port Hedland RFDS Bases in WA. Similar applications are being investigated for bases in Queensland.

Under normal circumstances non VKS-737 subscribers are not permitted to contact VKS-737 bases or other VKS-737 subscribers, however in the case of genuine emergency calls non VKS-737 subscribers will be able to contact the RFDS on VKS-737 frequencies.

There will be four ways to contact the RFDS in WA & QLD via HF in the case of a genuine emergency after 30th September 2010 # #:"

- Selcall the RFDS directly on either VKS-737 frequencies or the primary frequency * * of the base in question (see table).
- Call a VKS-737 operator by selcall who can then transfer the call to the relevant RFDS operator.
- Call a VKS-737 operator during a regular sked and ask for assistance, the operator will transfer you to an RFDS operator.
- Place a general voice call on a VKS-737 frequency and request that the person answering sends a selcall to the RFDS on your behalf.

Two tone Emergency Calls will still be available through Charleville & Mt Isa until December 2010.

* * Important note: Selcall calls will only be available on RFDS primary frequencies after VKS-737 base station equipment is licensed and been installed at the relevant RFDS bases.

It should be noted that modern base station equipment is not capable of responding to the "two-tone" Emergency Call system currently used by the RFDS; subsequently the two-tone service will not be available through RFDS bases in Western Australia and Cairns in Queensland after 30th September 2010; the two-tone service will not be available through Charleville & Mt Isa after December 31st 2010.

One solution to not having selcall capability is to install a Jenal SC51 selcall into the radio, while this option is very successful it is also fairly costly at around $700 including installation.

Discussions have recently been held with Alan Hackett from Jenal Communications regarding the possibility of manufacturing a small, stand-alone selcall encoder; this would be similar to the units popular a few years ago to allow answering machine messages to be checked from public phone boxes etc.

To make an emergency call it would be necessary to enter the selcall number of the relevant base station into the keypad, place the unit next to the microphone, hold the PTT button on the microphone and then press the call button on the unit. The encoder would have the added advantage of making any radio selcall compatible (transmit only) allowing subscribers access to normal VKS-737 selcall features i.e. contacting base stations outside of sked times, making telephone calls etc.

Anyone interested in the new encoder should contact Alan Hackett via the Jenal Communications website at **www.jenal.com** and advise him of your interest, the feasibility (and costing) of this project will be determined by the number of potential customers.

Over the next few months there will be many upgrades to the VKS-737 Network to fulfil our commitment to work closely with the RFDS in Queensland and Western Australia; updates will be posted on the VKS-737 website and in future issues of Network News.

Emergency contact to RFDS Bases using Selcall via VKS-737 Bases

	VKS-737 Base	RFDS Broken Hill [11, 12] 12	RFDS Cairns 14	RFDS Charleville 15	RFDS Jandakot (All WA) 11	RFDS Mt Isa 16	RFDS Port Augusta [6,7] 17
06	**Adelaide** (Primary)	0612	0614	0615	0611	0616	0617
96	**Adelaide** (Secondary)	9612	9614	9615	9611	9616	9617
08	**Alice Springs** (Primary)	0812	0814	0815	0811	0816	0817
97	**Alice Springs** (Secondary)	9712	9714	9715	9711	9716	9717
77	**Cairns** (Primary)[1,8]	7712	7714	7715	7711	7716	7717
86	**Cairns** (Secondary)	8612	8614	8615	8611	8616	8617
74	**Carnarvon** [1,2]	7412	7414	7415	7411	7416	7417
81	**Charleville** [1,9]	8112	8114	8115	8111	8116	8117
80	**Charters Towers** (Primary)	8012	8014	8015	8011	8016	8017
95	**Charters Towers** (Secondary)	9512	9514	9515	9511	9516	9517
94	**Darwin**	9412	9414	9415	9411	9416	9417
92	**Derby** [1,3]	9212	9214	9215	9211	9216	9217
75	**Meekatharra** [1,4]	7512	7514	7515	7511	7516	7517
82	**Mount Isa** [1,10]	8212	8214	8215	8211	8216	8217
68	**Newcastle**	6812	6814	6815	6811	6816	6817
05	**Perth**	0512	0514	0515	0511	0516	0517
78	**Port Hedland** [1,5]	7812	7814	7815	7811	7816	7817
07	**St Marys**	0712	0714	0715	0711	0716	0717
89	**Swan Hill**	8912	8914	8915	8911	8916	8917

Notes:

All bases scan VKS-737 Channels 1 to 7 for selcall calls plus RFDS frequencies as listed below.

1. VKS-737 base stations will be located at the RFDS Base
2. Carnarvon will also scan 2280, 2656, 4045, 5360 & 6890kHz.
3. Derby will also scan 2792, 5300 & 6945kHz
4. Meekatharra will also scan 2280, 4010, 5360, 6825 & 6880kHz
5. Port Hedland will also scan 2280, 4030, 5300 & 6960kHz
6. Port Augusta handles emergencies for all of South Australia and the Northern Territory south of Tennant Creek.
7. Calls to Port Augusta RFDS are dealt with as normal incoming telephone calls for assistance.
8. Cairns will also scan 2020, 2260, 5145 & 7465kHz
9. Charleville will also scan 2020, 4980 & 6845kHz
10. Mt Isa will also scan 2020, 5110 & 6965kHz
11. Broken Hill handles emergencies for all of New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania
12. Calls to Broken Hill RFDS are dealt with as normal incoming telephone calls for assistance.

Further information relating to the changes can be obtained by contacting:

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- Steve Cunningham – ICT Manager RFDS Queensland Section   (07) 3860 1100

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