



## Reverend John Flynn (1880–1951)

*Pioneered the world's first aerial medical service, now known as the Royal Flying Doctor Service.*

*Today, there are 21 flying doctor bases around Australia, which continue to spread a 'mantle of safety' across 7.15 million square kilometres. The Royal Flying Doctor Service remains the largest and most comprehensive aeromedical emergency and healthcare service in the world.*



**1880:** Reverend John Flynn was born at Moliagul, Victoria, on 25 November 1880.

**1911:** He completed his training for the Presbyterian ministry, and in 1911 was appointed to the Smith of Dunesk Mission in the North Flinders Ranges of South Australia.

**1912:** Flynn was commissioned to undertake a survey of the needs of both the Aboriginal people and white settlers of the Northern Territory. His detailed reports resulted in the creation by the Presbyterian Church of its Australian Inland Mission (AIM), of which Flynn was appointed Superintendent. The Mission commenced operation with one nursing hostel, a nursing sister and a padre (chaplain).

**1926:** Under Flynn's leadership, the Australian Inland Mission had become a network of 10 strategically placed nursing hostels operating closely with patrol padres.

**1913–1927:** Keenly aware of the isolation of the people of inland Australia, Flynn used his magazine *The Inlander* as a vehicle to elicit financial support, to publicise the Mission's achievements and to make known his plans for the future. He believed that a 'mantle of safety' could be created for the isolated communities of northern Australia only with the establishment of an aerial medical service and the introduction of radio communications.

**1928:** Despite many setbacks and considerable opposition, Flynn's vision became a reality. On 17 May 1928, Dr K St Vincent Welch, with pilot Arthur Affleck at the controls of *Victory*, a De Havilland 50 aircraft leased from QANTAS, flew from Cloncurry to Julia Creek to answer the first call received by the AIM Aerial Medical Service.

**1929:** When the first pedal wireless built by Alfred Traeger was installed in Queensland, Flynn's quest for the more adequate protection of isolated communities was fulfilled. Flynn realised, however, that to operate successfully the fledgling aerial medical service must become part of a national operation with access to greater resources. To this end, he maintained contact with Members of Parliament and argued persuasively to gain the approval of the Presbyterian Church for a wider cooperative venture.

**1932:** At the age of 51, Flynn married Jean Blanch Baird, Secretary of the Australian Inland Mission.

**1933:** He was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in June 1933.

**1934:** The Australian Aerial Medical Service was established.

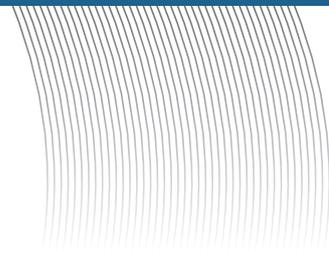
**1939:** Flynn was elected Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia for a three-year term.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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**1942:** The name Australian Aerial Medical Service was changed to the Flying Doctor Service of Australia.

**1951:** Flynn died of cancer in Sydney on 5 May 1951 and his ashes were buried at the foot of Mt Gillen, Alice Springs.

**1955:** The designation ‘Royal’ was added to the name the Flying Doctor Service of Australia.

**1956:** The John Flynn Memorial Church was opened in Alice Springs as a tribute.

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