

**Life Flight**

Saves time · Saves lives

**1,543  
LIVES  
YOU  
SAVED  
THIS  
YEAR**

PHOTO CREDIT:  
xwb.aviation



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2024**

# Greetings

It's my great pleasure to present Life Flight's 2024 Annual Report, a reflection of the significant achievements by our teams that are made possible by the steadfast support of our community and partners. Over the past year, Life Flight has undertaken over 1,500 critical missions, ensuring that patients in urgent need have received timely and expert medical care. Each of those missions are a testament to the generosity and collaboration of all who support our cause.

Our ability to provide this essential service is underpinned by a wonderful community, a diverse group of donors, corporate partners, grant providers, local councils, and government agencies, including Health NZ and ACC. This broad base of financial support from the community enables us to deliver life-saving services at no cost to the patient and eases the financial strain for local hospitals and healthcare providers. This collective effort ensures that our services remain accessible, sustainable, and ready to respond whenever and wherever we are needed most, and we are deeply grateful for the trust and support that makes this possible.

A key priority this year has been the continuous advancement of the safety of our Air Ambulance plane services, extending critical care to more New Zealanders, and continuing to improve our internal capabilities to better support the healthcare systems around us. These objectives have driven everything we do, ensuring that we deliver the



**PHOTO CREDIT:**  
Lindsay Keats Photography

highest possible standards of care while remaining responsive to the evolving needs of our local communities.

An example of this in action is the team stepping up to meet the growing need in Central New Zealand with a second base in Hamilton. This major development will allow far more New Zealanders to access specialist healthcare, especially those in remote or underserved areas. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I wish to recognise and commend the entire Life Flight team for their tireless efforts in making this important milestone a reality. Their dedication and hard work have been invaluable.

In closing, I wish to express our profound appreciation for the support we receive. The reliability of this support allows us to plan for the future with confidence, and to continually enhance the quality of the aeromedical services that we provide to the community.

Thank you once again for your continued commitment.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R Stone'.

**Richard Stone**  
LIFE FLIGHT CHAIR

# Welcome

Over the past year, we've extended our fixed-wing air ambulance flight operations to include aeromedical missions on behalf of Waikato Hospital from our new Hamilton base. One of our King Air B200C aircraft is now permanently based in Hamilton, and the Waikato Life Flight team will move into a new, dedicated aeromedical base early in 2025.

During the year, we committed to purchasing additional Beechcraft King Air B200C air ambulance planes from our colleagues at Pel-Air in Australia. These aircraft will complement our current fleet, allowing us to permanently base at least three air ambulance planes in Wellington and at least two aircraft in Hamilton moving forward. These 'new' aircraft also feature extra-wide cargo doors and automatic patient loading devices to enable us to continue to manage patient transfers as safely as possible.

Life Flight will have the newest and most highly specified, dedicated air ambulance fleet in the country, with all of our planes providing true bariatric capability for patients throughout Central New Zealand, and beyond.

We've secured these planes with the help of a fabulous \$1M grant from the New Zealand Community Trust (NZCT), together with more fantastic 6-figure support from Pub Charity, Rotary and Lions Clubs going towards the



**PHOTO CREDIT:**  
Lindsay Keats Photography

## **“Our donors and sponsors also remain vital to our day-to-day operations**

**as part of our extended team, and without their incredible ongoing support throughout the year, we simply wouldn't be able to help all those people in need in local communities right across Central New Zealand.”**

refurbishment work required for each aircraft to get them ready to enter service locally here in New Zealand.

We've also extended our network of patient transfer vehicles (PTVs), to ensure a more seamless bed-to-bed service for both our clinical partners across the Central Region and our patients, with four PTVs due to be in service before the end of 2024 in Wellington, Hamilton, Gisborne and Napier. All of these vehicles are fitted with power stretchers, to help us provide a consistent service for all ICU and Neonatal ICU inter-hospital transfers in these locations, including bariatric patients. We're already planning to add additional PTVs to our fleet in 2025.

*continued on next page*

Our fundraising performance over the past 12 months has once again been exceptional, with the team generating well over \$7M of fundraising income during the year. Thank you to our incredible supporters for keeping us flying.

Our Westpac Rescue Chopper sponsorship continues to underpin our rotary wing operations, with Westpac now well into their 5th decade of supporting our Wellington-based Westpac Rescue Helicopter service via one of New Zealand's most enduring corporate partnerships, which dates all the way back to 1981.

Our partnership with The Hurricanes entered its second season this year, with the Canes squad continuing to support our event-based activity, including our Annual Life Flight Open Day.

The 26th iteration of the iconic Champions Charity Luncheon, run by our very good friend Ian Klinac, saw almost 1,000 people attend a rugby-filled afternoon at Tākina, Wellington's new Convention Centre, where the likes of Sir Graham Henry, Sir Wayne 'Buck' Shelford, Josh Kronfeld, Frank Bunce, Kees Meeuws and a host of other former All Blacks greats kept everyone entertained with anecdotes and stories about their playing days. The biggest and best Champions Luncheon yet raised over \$350,000 for Life Flight, and introduced us to a new, wider group of donors and supporters.

Teamwork, as always, remains at the heart of everything we do here at Life Flight. Our highly experienced Pilots, Crew and Clinical teams, supported by our extremely talented



base staff, and longstanding key operating partners, work together to ensure that we're ready to help people in need 24/7, 365-days-a-year.

Our donors and sponsors remain vital to our day-to-day operations as part of our extended team, and without their incredible ongoing support throughout the year, we simply wouldn't be able to help all of those people in need in local communities right across Central New Zealand. It's this teamwork, together with the continuing generosity of the local communities that we serve, which quite literally enables us to save time and save lives every single day of the year.

So, on behalf of the entire Life Flight team, I want to say a huge thank you yet again, to everyone who's contributed to our aeromedical missions over the past year, for your crucial support during yet another big 12 months of delivering life-saving aeromedical services.

Warm regards,

**Mark Johnston**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## Our vision

To provide exceptional care in the air

## Our purpose

We help to save lives by providing outstanding aeromedical care and transport to people in need

## Our culture

Our **teamwork** saves lives

**Safety** underpins everything we do

We **support** each other to help those in need

We find **new ways** to be “best in class”



## Our strategy in action

Each year we strive to improve on our vision and purpose, here are a few examples.

### OUR TEAMWORK SAVES LIVES

With the opening of our second base in Hamilton, our team has expanded to include dedicated Flight Nurses. This reduces the need for local hospitals to provide their own nurses or doctors, supporting Health NZ to allocate their healthcare resources where they're needed most and flying more people to care. Integrating seamlessly into the wider healthcare system and collaborating efficiently with local organisations is one of our top priorities. Discover more about our Hamilton base on page 9.



Westpac Chopper team  
James and Colin on  
the Christchurch  
Hospital helipad.

### WE FIND NEW WAYS TO BE “BEST IN CLASS”

New Zealand's growing population of bariatric patients has faced limited access to aeromedical care, despite being at higher risk of serious health conditions. To address this gap, we have introduced bariatric stretchers alongside the automated loading system of our King Air aircraft. This upgrade enhances safety for patients, crew, and medical teams alike. Read more about our transformative equipment on page 13.

### SAFETY UNDERPINS EVERYTHING WE DO

We have expanded our fleet with three new Patient Transfer Vehicles (PTVs) to facilitate safe and efficient road transfers between hospitals and airports. These vehicles are specially modified to accommodate bariatric stretchers, featuring an automated patient loading and unloading system and will speed up aeromedical transfers for local healthcare systems. Learn more about these developments on page 15.

# A game-changer for aeromedical care in New Zealand

FY24 marked a transformative year for Life Flight, as we launched New Zealand's newest and most highly specialised aeromedical fleet. Our three modified King Air B200C Air Ambulances are improving patient care leading to better outcomes, creating a more equitable service for New Zealanders, and continuing the improvement of our internal capabilities.



**PHOTO CREDIT:**  
Zeah Pendre Photography

## HOW OUR AIRCRAFT MEET THE GROWING NEED:



**Equitable care for larger patients:** For the first time in New Zealand, we can safely transport bariatric patients by air, thanks to a wider cargo door and a mechanical loading arm - meeting the growing needs of our healthcare system.



**Safer neonatal transport:** Our enhanced loading system can now mechanically manage neonatal incubators weighing up to 140 kg, improving both efficiency and safety during critical transfers.



**Extended reach to remote areas:** With larger tires and specialised landing gear, we can land at smaller airfields and grass runways, providing equitable medical care to remote communities previously disadvantaged by their location.



**Enhanced speed and efficiency:** The King Airs' ability to fly at higher altitudes and speeds, combined with halved patient loading times, reduces the duration of life-saving missions.

These advancements have brought us closer to meeting New Zealand's increasing demand for air ambulance services. This year, we've flown 20% more patients, and we're anticipating a further 25% increase in flying during FY25, ensuring more people get the care they need, faster.

## United for better care

Strong partnerships with industry experts have powered this major upgrade. Acquiring these aircraft from Australia's Royal Flying Doctor Service brings decades of aeromedical expertise to our fleet; and our longstanding partnership with Freightways and its subsidiaries, Air Freight NZ and Fieldair Engineering, has further streamlined our operations, enabling us to deliver care faster and more efficiently.

Generous financial pledges in FY24, including \$1 million from NZCT and \$850,000 from Pub Charity, will enable us to continue the expansion of our fleet in FY25. This growth positions us to serve even more New Zealanders, ensuring we remain at the forefront of aeromedical innovation for years to come.



**PHOTO CREDIT:**  
Lindsay Keats Photography

**“Our modified Air Ambulance fleet has improved patient outcomes when there was no other option.**

For example, earlier this year, a Whanganui local was diagnosed with a critical medical condition and required urgent transport to Wellington for treatment, but their weight meant that no other service could get them to care in time. Fortunately, our loading system was perfect for the job.

The hospital team weighed the patient at over 230kg. We safely loaded the patient, secured them in the aircraft, and got them to Wellington after a 25-minute flight.

**Without the combination of cargo door and automated/no lift capability, we would never have safely brought the patient down to Wellington to receive the care they needed.”**

— LUKE ROHLOFF, FIXED-WING FLIGHT OPERATIONS MANAGER



## Our second base **is taking off**

With an urgent need for aeromedical care in the Central North Island, Life Flight stepped up to support the region with the opening of our second base in Hamilton.

From this new base, staff and aircraft can quickly reach communities across Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Gisborne, and beyond, providing life-saving services to thousands more Kiwis. We began operations in February 2024, following the retirement of Philips Search and Rescue Trust's (PSRT) ageing fixed-wing aircraft in 2023, and worked closely with PSRT to ensure the community continued to receive the highest possible care throughout this period and moving forward.

With modern aircraft features like automated patient loading system and grass landing capabilities, we can meet the region's unique needs and provide equitable access of care for rural and remote communities.

**Over the next decade, we expect to fly well over 5,000 people from our Hamilton base alone.**

Alongside our flight crew, our Hamilton base also includes a team of onsite flight nurses who can accompany low-medium acuity flights, while the exceptional team at Waikato Hospital can accompany our high acuity and ICU flights. For communities that lack dedicated flight nurses or doctors, our flight nurses will speed up care for patients, reduce costs for local hospitals, and create more efficient coordination.

We're deeply grateful to the communities that have supported Life Flight for nearly 50 years, enabling us to fly more Kiwis to essential care than ever before.



# Meet Indie

## from Nelson

Chelsea and Mitch had just welcomed their first child, a baby girl called Indie. But after she was born at Nelson Hospital, their first cuddle lasted only seconds. Indie was immediately rushed to the specialist care unit.



Thanks to her flight, Indie is now a happy toddler with no complications.

Indie had a serious brain condition, with potentially devastating complications. She needed a complex treatment, but the closest care was a hundred kilometres away at Wellington Hospital. Getting there over land and sea would take over six hours.

**Indie's condition was fading by the minute, but Life Flight gave her a chance at care.**

"My head was spinning," says Indie's dad, Mitch, "But Life Flight were so calm and controlled. They gave us a glimmer of hope."

Our crew loaded Indie in her incubator onto the Air Ambulance. Within minutes they took off, monitoring her condition all the way. The flight took just 27 minutes.

**"...Life Flight were so calm and controlled. They gave us a glimmer of hope."**

— MITCH, INDIE'S DAD



After her treatment, the family boarded again for a careful flight home.

Immediately Indie started treatment to prevent a permanent brain injury. Thankfully it all went smoothly and seven days later, Indie was well enough to return home.

"As it is, she's happy and healthy, with no signs of complications," says Chelsea. "Without Life Flight our baby might not be here today."



**PHOTO CREDIT:**  
Dimitri Calavrias Photography  
Touching down at the Life Flight base at Wellington Airport.

Missions made  
**possible  
by you**



**1,543**  
PATIENTS FLOWN

**613**  
PATIENT SUPPORT  
WHĀNAU FLOWN

**359**  
BABIES/CHILDREN FLOWN

## Training our teams

Training is an integral part of Life Flight's day-to-day operations to make sure the crews are ready for anything, anywhere, anytime.

Training ranges from utilizing new technology and equipment, keeping up best practices outlined by Health New Zealand, and ensuring our rescue techniques are up-to-date and efficient.

**169**

Training missions

**86**

Westpac Rescue Helicopter training missions

**83**

Air Ambulance Plane training missions



This portable training simulator visits the Life Flight base twice a year.

## Helicopter Training Simulator

Our service partner Search and Rescue Services Ltd's touring helicopter simulator ensures safety by allowing pilots to practise complex manoeuvres and emergencies in a risk-free, realistic environment. It builds crucial skills without endangering crew or aircraft, while also reducing costs and environmental impact.

# Equipped for the job

Thanks to the support of Grant Funders and our dedicated community of supporters, Life Flight has been able to purchase new equipment and upgrade existing technologies. Here are simply a few:

**Bariatric Stretchers:** Our new Air Ambulance planes are equipped with specialised bariatric stretchers, ensuring we can provide equitable care for larger patients. These essential stretchers accommodate patients weighing up to 240kgs, meeting the growing needs of our population.

FUNDED WITH THE HELP OF:  
Eastern and Central Community Trust  
Grassroots Central Trust  
Kiwi Gaming Foundation  
Lion Foundation

**Helicopter Helmet:** The flight helmet is vital for our helicopter crew, offering noise reduction, built-in communication, and essential protection from debris or injury during high-risk operations and hard landings.

FUNDED WITH THE HELP OF: Ray Watts Charitable Trust

**Emergency Breathing Systems:** The HEED 3 emergency breathing system provides helicopter crew with up to 32 breaths of compressed air, enabling safe underwater escape during a water ditching.

FUNDED WITH THE HELP OF: Dorothy L Newman Charitable Trust

**Hamilton T1 Ventilator:** The Hamilton-T1 Ventilator is crucial for Life Flight's Air Ambulance planes, supporting patients who can't breathe on their own. With our fleet expanded to three planes, we needed another unit to provide seamless care for both adult and paediatric patients.

FUNDED WITH THE HELP OF: Kiwi Gaming Foundation



Emergency breathing system



Helicopter helmet



On-board patient ventilator

# Meet Adrian

## from Palmerston North

Adrian got in his car after a Palmerston North City Council meeting when he noticed he felt unwell. He went home to rest, hoping the pain would pass, but after 20 minutes, he knew something was seriously wrong.

His Grandson Tyler rushed over, but when he arrived, Adrian was hanging onto the letterbox, barely able to stand. A&E recognised the signs immediately—Adrian was having an Aortic Dissection, a tear in his heart. Every minute was critical.

**Wellington Hospital was Adrian's only chance, and Life Flight's Air Ambulances are the reason he got there.**

Life Flight received the call and Adrian was boarded for the flight. "The Life Flight crew made me feel safe," Adrian shared.

Adrian touched down in Wellington quickly and was rushed into surgery.

Adrian spent 12 hours in the operating theatre, but the surgery was a success. His family was beyond relieved—our Air Ambulances got him there in time.

Now, Adrian is back to volunteering and being active in the community. "I'm very grateful for what I can still do and for all the people who made that possible."



**“I’m very grateful for what I can still do and for all the people who made that possible.”**

— ADRIAN



The Wellington based PTV departing the hangar for an urgent patient transfer.



## Seamless care on the road

This year, Life Flight enhanced its service with the addition of three patient transfer vehicles (PTVs), purchased from Wellington Free Ambulance.

FUNDED WITH THE HELP OF:  
Pelorus Trust

These vehicles speed up the service and reduce costs for local healthcare systems by picking up patients directly from hospitals and transporting them to our Air Ambulance Planes for smooth, coordinated air transfers.

By positioning our PTVs in key locations, we can improve community health outcomes—reducing delays and ensuring faster, more efficient patient transfers.

With crucial fit-outs happening in FY24, these PTVs will be stationed in FY25, across Gisborne, Hamilton, Wellington, and beyond, set to provide safe, reliable care every step of the way.

# Saving lives together

Many of the lives saved last year were thanks to the fundraising accomplished through events. We held in-house events and were thrilled to be the charity of choice in events hosted by our partners and friends. Here are just a few!



**PHOTO CREDIT:**  
RADAR Photography

Guests queued to see the interior of our Air Ambulance plane at the annual Open Day.

## **Life Flight Open Day sponsored by Interislander**

Our biggest event of the year, and a chance to thank the Wellington community! With principal sponsor Interislander, we welcomed over 5,000 visitors to our rescue base. While sharing our mission is key, the food, fun, and live emergency demos made it a truly memorable day.

## **Life Flight Gala presented by Hiremaster**

Once a year, we bring together our sponsors, partners, donors, and friends for a fantastic evening of dining and auctions. Our ever generous guests raised \$104,000 to keep us flying high.

## **An Evening with Shaun Wallace**

The Dark Destroyer himself teamed up with Believe It or Not Quizzes and Star Hospitality for an epic quiz night, raising \$25,000 to help save lives.



**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Champions luncheon, Shaun Wallace and the Life Flight team, and Westpac Chopper street appeal.



**PHOTO CREDIT:** Brady Dyer Photography

**PHOTO CREDIT:** RADAR Photography

### **Westpac Chopper Appeal Month**

Our major sponsor, Westpac, led a fantastic Chopper Appeal month, featuring a nationwide marketing campaign, local quiz night, beer tasting, and the iconic street appeal. Their incredible efforts raised over \$100,000 for Life Flight.

### **26th ELE Champions Charity Luncheon**

Thanks to Ian Klinac and the event's sponsors, this year's Champions Luncheon saw over 900 guests gather at the Tākina Conference Centre, raising a staggering \$350,000 in a single afternoon.

### **The Wellington Truck and Transport show**

The Silverstream Lions took the event to new heights this year with 220 trucks in Upper Hutt, raising \$20,000 for Life Flight.

### **Hurricanes Charity Round supported by Chemist Warehouse**

A game not to be missed! Our partners, the Hurricanes, gave it their all, and with the help of Chemist Warehouse, \$30,000 was raised to support Life Flight.

### **Come On Board**

We introduced our new King Air fleet to Masterton, Blenheim, and Palmerston North, giving these communities a first-hand look at our life-saving aircraft.

*Thank you*

**to the organisers for the incredible mahi that went into making these events such a success.**

# Meet Nicky

## from Carterton

At 2:00 AM, Nicky woke with a sore arm and, to be safe, alerted her husband, Nathan. They called Healthline, but no other warnings appeared. To be cautious, they arranged for a nurse to call them back.

While waiting, Nicky's heart began to race—the warning sign they were waiting for. As the nurse called, Nicky slumped forward and bit her tongue.

Nathan was panicked but did everything to stay calm and followed the nurse's instructions, giving Nicky chest compressions for 20 minutes until an ambulance arrived. They discovered Nicky had a severe blockage restricting blood flow to her brain and needed emergency surgery.

**“Every day, they’re out there saving someone.”**

— NATHAN



Thanks to a fast response, Nicky is back with her husband Nathan and dog Kohbee.

### **Life Flight's Westpac Chopper was airborne within 16 minutes.**

Pilot Anna, an experienced ex-Airforce pilot, recalls it was one of her first night missions with Life Flight.

“The call-out came through – PURPLE, Status One, Carterton. That gets you up and moving very quickly,” says Anna.

Within an hour of the callout, Nicky was in Wellington Hospital, where doctors prepared for her four-hour surgery.

Thanks to the community, Nicky is now making the most of life, feeling stronger and mentally sharper.

Nicky and Nathan live under our Westpac Chopper's flight path to Masterton Hospital and are often taken back to the day their lives would have changed without it.

# Sponsors

The Trust gratefully acknowledges the contributions and support received from the following companies and organisations.

## Major Sponsor



## Air Ambulance Sponsor



## Vehicle Sponsor



FaganMotors Ltd  
MASTERTON



Absolutely Positively  
Wellington City Council  
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- › Chair of the Board, Richard Stone
- › Deputy Chair, Greg Bishop
- › Dr Alex Psirides
- › Karyn Hathaway
- › Chris Lowry
- › Rachael Fletcher

## AMBASSADORS

- › Clive Button
- › Bill Day
- › Juliet Best

## PATRON

- › Her Excellency, The Right Honourable Dame Cindy Kiro, GNZM, QSO, Governor-General of New Zealand



# Grant funders

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Life Flight would like to thank these wonderful organisations for their ongoing support. Grants help Life Flight to provide 24/7 emergency air services 365 days a year and are hugely appreciated.

**PHOTO CREDIT:** NZPS

Crucial modifications enable our Air Ambulances to land on grass runways.

Bob & Dorothy Garratt Family Trust

Bowen Trust

Cossie Club – Upper Hutt

Dorothy L Newman Charitable Trust

EM Pharazyn Trust

Eastern & Central Community Health Trust

FH Muter Trust

Gaynor Charitable Trust

Grassroots Central Trust

Howey Family Charitable Trust

Ian & Beverley Newton Trust

Jack Jeffs Charitable trust

Kāpiti Coast District Council

Kiwi Gaming Foundation

Leonard Monk Charitable Trust

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SJ Shayle-George Charitable Trust

Thornburn Charitable Trust

TG Macarthy Trust

Trust House

Upper Hutt City Council

Wairarapa Community Health Trust

Wellington City Council

WN Pharazyn Trust

# Gifts in Wills

We are very humbled to have received such exceptional generosity from supporters who have passed and remembered Life Flight in their Wills. This year, these special supporters contributed a total of \$767,500. Here are just some of our kind supporters:

The Late Miss Christina (Kirsty) Campbell

The Estate of Lois Bowie

Tom W Muir

**PHOTO CREDIT:**  
BT Winters Photography



## FINANCIALS

A view from the Air Ambulance returning from an urgent transfer to Christchurch.

Government agencies finance just under 60% of the funds required to keep our service operational. Despite their invaluable support, this means there is a significant annual funding shortfall, which our wonderful supporters donate toward. Life Flight also keeps at least three months' worth of operating revenue in reserves.

**Date 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024**

Operating Revenue \$10,115,000

Less Operating and Administrative Expenses \$17,640,000

Operational Deficit (\$7,525,000)

Fundraising Revenue \$7,457,000

Operating Deficit for the Year (\$68,000)

We are a registered charity (#CC24283) and abide by the codes and standards of the Fundraising Institute of New Zealand.



Westpac Chopper crew Nigel,  
Scott, and Anna preparing for  
a training mission.

# Life Flight

Saves time · Saves lives

Your support through a  
challenging financial year has  
kept our aircraft in the sky,  
saving time and saving lives.

You have helped friends,  
whānau, neighbours and  
communities with your  
generosity - we could not have  
done it without you!

**The Life Flight Trust**  
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**THANK YOU**  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT