Royal Flying Doctor Service

What provisions are relevant to Royal Flying Doctor Service workers?

Schedule 5 (emergency service providers), part 3 of the Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021 (MPMR) is relevant to Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) workers.

Schedule 5, part 3, section 7 provides a definition of RFDS medicine chest as follows:

RFDS medicine chest means a medicine chest kept at a place for the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia if the medicine chest is approved by a medical practitioner who is—

employed by the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia; and
authorised in writing by the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia to approve the keeping of medicine chests.

Schedule 5, part 3, section 8 of the MPMR provides that:

A person who:

(a) is a worker for the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia; and
(b) is in charge of an RFDS medicine chest,

may deal with medicines as set out in the table below.

	Column 1 – dealing	Column 2 – medicine	Column 3 – scope of dealing
1	give a treatment dose	a medicine from the RFDS medicine chest	the medicine is given on a prescription
2	administer	a medicine from the RFDS medicine chest	the medicine is administered on a prescription
3	possess	an S4 or S8 medicine from the RFDS medicine chest	the medicine is possessed for a purpose mentioned in this column

Section 25(3) of the Act provides that give a treatment dose, of a medicine, means give one (1) or more doses of the medicine to a person to be taken by a particular person, or administered to an animal, at a later time.

What other provisions are relevant to the RFDS?

A general approval is a type of substance authority provided for under the Act.

Section 68 of the Act provides that a general approval is an approval that authorises a person to carry out a regulated activity with a regulated substance stated in the approval.

Section 68 of the Act further provides that a regulation may prescribe different classes of general approvals for carrying out different types of regulated activities.

There are only three (3) classes of general approvals prescribed in section 14 of the MPMR (acute health conditions at isolated sites, emergency first aid, and emergency management of animals).

Bespoke general approvals outside the three (3) prescribed classes may also be granted to applicants to cater for unique or unusual circumstances. Applications for such general approvals will be considered carefully on a case-by-case basis, on their merits, and having regard to specific criteria.

Section 253 of the Act (a transitional provision), provides relevantly as follows:

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1) This section applies in relation to an HDPR authority that, immediately before the commencement, authorised a person from the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia to carry out an activity with a substance under the HDPR, section 54(1) or 157(1).
2) The HDPR authority continues in effect as if this Act had not commenced until—
   (a) if, within 1 year after the commencement, an appropriately qualified officer of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia applies for a substance authority equivalent to the HDPR authority—the day the application for the substance authority is decided; or
   (b) otherwise—the day that is 1 year after the commencement.

In other words, current RFDS authorities under the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation) 1996 (HDPR) will continue until an appropriately qualified RFDS officer applies for a substance authority equivalent to the HDPR authority (a general approval in this instance), provided this is within one (1) year after commencement of the Act, or otherwise, the HDPR RFDS authority will continue for one (1) year only.

There are some other requirements in the MPMR that do not apply to the RFDS in certain circumstances:

- section 92 (Oral prescription for S4 or S8 medicine) - this section does not apply if the medicine being prescribed is from an RFDS medicine chest kept by the RFDS of Australia;
- section 100 (Oral prescription) - this section does not apply if the medicine being prescribed is from an RFDS medicine chest kept by the RFDS of Australia;
- section 136 (Treatment dose record) – the requirement to keep a treatment dose record does not apply if the treatment dose was given from an RFDS medicine chest kept by the RFDS of Australia;
- section 143 (Application of part – disposing of waste from diversion-risk medicines) - this part does not apply if the waste being disposed of is from a diversion-risk medicine from

an RFDS medicine chest kept by the RFDS of Australia under a general approval for the service; and

- section 226 (Reporting lost or stolen medicines) – there is no requirement to notify the chief executive and the police service as required by section 220(2), if (a) the medicine is lost or stolen from an RFDS medicine chest kept by the RFDS of Australia; and (b) a report about the incident is given to the senior medical officer of the RFDS of Australia.

How is an RFDS medicine chest stocked?

An RFDS medicine chest is generally stocked under the approval process undertaken by a senior medical officer, RFDS (or similar position), and as specified in a general approval – medicines, RFDS (or similar) document.

Associated guidance documents

- General approvals – factsheet

Further information

For further information, contact the Healthcare Approvals and Regulation Unit:

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