



## Stuck Out!

Getting stuck out in Arnhem Land is not an uncommon occurrence when flying during the wet season. MAF pilots often face challenging situations where decisions need to be made on whether to proceed forward and try to find a way through the weather, or to land somewhere safe overnight for the weather to pass by.

Jenny Wichert, MAF Arnhem Land Home School Support Teacher, recently experienced this challenge as a passenger on a MAF plane. She and her daughter, who was visiting the area, were returning to Yirrkala from the small community of Ramingining.



Jenny had flown with MAF before and her previous experience was that of smooth conditions and clear skies. This time however the clouds began to darken and the rain began to fall heavily. Jenny began to pray and she felt a sense of peace and confidence in the situation, she was reminded that MAF pilots are well trained and do not take unnecessary risks. As Jenny looked from the window of the aircraft she saw a beautiful rainbow in the sky which comforted her that God was with them.



The MAF flight with three passengers on board had flown past the community of Dhalinbuy, which lies to the east of Gove, and was only 24 kms out from arriving into Gove Airport. Unfortunately a massive wall of rain developed between them and the final destination, and there was no way through.

Pilot Fabio Zuglian continued to circle around the area hoping that the weather would pass but as time was running short and available fuel was decreasing a decision was made to divert to the homeland of Garrthalala which is 50 kms south of Gove. Fabio decided that staying overnight would hopefully allow the weather to clear in time for an early departure the next morning.



Just two weeks prior Jenny had the privilege of doing an overnight outreach with Fabio to Garrthalala. However this time it was a different situation as the school was on holiday so there were no teachers present, no bedding and no food!

It was, therefore, a huge blessing that the stranded team met up with Sarah, a Laynhapuy worker. She was very open, friendly and tried to help in any way she could. Jenny said; “The evening was actually great as we shared stories and talked more about what MAF is all about. We also had plenty of laughs as we created some interesting dishes from what was available” The next day, after a short night’s rest, Fabio found a space in the weather and was able to return to Gove.



Reflecting on this journey, Jenny now really has a good understanding that flying in the wet season is not an easy task. She is impressed that MAF pilots take every challenge as it comes and are able to make informed and good decisions to get people where they need to go. As Jenny says “Not only did our pilot fly brilliantly he also ensured we would be looked after for the night – including cooking the pasta just right!”

It would appear that sometimes God guides people into places and situations that seem unexpected and uncomfortable at the time, yet He is able to use these circumstances so that other people are encouraged and blessed.

MAF pilots would not undertake these wet season challenges if they didn’t have God’s protective hand over both the planes and the passengers. MAF is well respected In Arnhem Land and that comes from a great flying record but also the servant heart and genuine interest in people that is shown by MAF staff.