



MISSION 2026

Saving More Lives

The Final Stage



Canterbury West Coast
AIR RESCUE
MISSION | 2026

When Every Second Counts

In a life and death situation, the unique speed and agility of a rescue helicopter makes all the difference; bringing life-saving equipment, rescue personnel, and trauma-trained medics directly to the patient in all kinds of situations.

The rescue helicopters provide a time-critical response to accidents, medical emergencies, patient transfer services, and search & rescue operations for the 680,000 people in our community from Kaikōura down to Waitaki and from Karamaea to Haast. Since 1989 the service has undertaken over 18,000 missions.

With the help of our supporters, in the past year the rescue helicopter service has attended over 1100 missions, a 16% increase from the previous year.

These missions would not be possible without the skill and dedication of the pilots, crew, and paramedics who are ready to go 24/7.

Whilst we are never going to eliminate the need for emergency health, trauma responses, and search and rescue, we can ensure that patient care and outcomes are optimised by funding

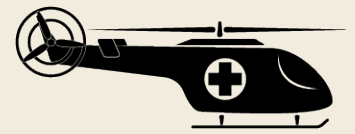
- ~ world class **service delivery**,
- ~ pilot and crew **training**, and
- ~ technically advanced **specialist equipment**.

In partnership with our operator, GCH Aviation, and our service contract partners HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service), and the Health NZ / ACC Ambulance Team we endeavour to provide better outcomes for patients irrespective of location, age or emergency type.

With an aging population in rural areas and a healthcare system reliant on the 'hub and spoke' model of centralised specialist services, the demand for the rescue helicopter service has never been greater.

As part of the New Zealand Treasury's better business case framework, we have identified four critical areas of need – or Pillars – where there is demonstrable evidence of opportunities to improve patient outcomes and offer the best possible rescue helicopter service for Canterbury and the West Coast.

Collectively, they form part of our MISSION 2026 campaign.



1151
missions in
2024

386
Missions
Across the
West Coast

765
Missions
Across
Canterbury



over 90%
of patients were
transported to
hospital



63
Search & Rescue
Missions



7%
are Children
under 16

An Update on MISSION 2026

MISSION 2026 was launched in March 2024 with a clear vision: to save more lives across the region.

Purchasing upgraded rescue helicopters to replace the ageing BK117 models was the cornerstone of the project. With the Airbus H145 being the global gold standard for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) because of its advanced capability and reliability, this was the helicopter of choice for the Canterbury West Coast Air Rescue Trust.

However, with the current lead time for a new helicopter from Airbus at over 3 years, this was too long for the service to wait and so the search began for an alternative. Securing four H145 from REGA - the Swiss Air Rescue Service - was a major achievement.

The Trust, on behalf of the community, have stepped in to purchase and thereby secure these new helicopters for the region.

Through the combined efforts of the Trust, our service operator GCH Aviation, Health New Zealand, Westpac NZ, and the generous support of MISSION 2026 donors, these helicopters have been purchased.

Helicopter Arrival Schedule*

- Helicopter 1 Arrived in Christchurch late August 2025
- Helicopters 2 & 3 Due to arrive in Christchurch in Mid-November 2025
- Helicopter 4 Due to arrive in Christchurch January 2026

* The helicopters will take approximately 3 months each to commission into service.



The Trust securing these new H145 helicopters will allow the crew to provide the best service to our community. It is the biggest development in the sector over the last 40 years.

Murray Willocks - Chair, Canterbury West Coast Air Rescue Trust

MISSION 2026 – spending to date

Thank you to those who have made this dream of purchasing new helicopters possible.

The monies raised to date from MISSION 2026 have funded the following:

- The purchase of the new H145 helicopters.
- Transit insurance and air freighting costs.
- Medical fit out support.
- Purchasing the first ZOLL Defibrillator (kindly funded by Air Rescue and Community Services), with additional units to be purchased as the helicopters arrive.
- New, more advanced, Fenn Night Vision Goggles (Air Rescue and Community Services).
- H145 certification for the BK117 pilots.

Total expenditure to date:

- From MISSION 2026: \$1.1 million
- From West Coast Fund: \$200,000 (West Coast Pilot Training)

Summary

- With the arrival of the first rescue helicopter from Switzerland, all funds raised for MISSION 2026 have now been invested.
 - As the Trust now owns the H145 fleet, overall expenditure has increased significantly.
 - We are working proactively with Health New Zealand on an agreement that will see Ambulance New Zealand and the Trust jointly owning these helicopters through the Government's Special Purpose Vehicle initiative (a partnership between Ambulance NZ and ACC Investments) with GCH Aviation leasing them as the service operator.
 - Despite this, additional expenses remain, particularly for the medical configuration of helicopters two, three, and four, as well as the commissioning process. Each aircraft must be re-assembled, with existing parts replaced where necessary and new components and equipment installed.
 - Once the helicopters arrive at the emergency aviation base in Christchurch, they will undergo a series of engineering checks and tests, including full airworthiness assessments. Each machine will be carefully verified against New Zealand standards and signed off by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).
 - The final steps include securing New Zealand registration and arranging comprehensive insurance for each rescue helicopter.
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The Journey

- Our first H145 has now arrived in Christchurch.
- It began its journey in Switzerland, travelling by road to Frankfurt.
- From Frankfurt it was air freighted through Hong Kong and Melbourne before arriving in Auckland.
- At Ardmore Air Base near Auckland, the helicopter was reassembled and received CAA approval to fly down to Christchurch, which was the safest way to complete its journey.



The Entrol Simulator: an exciting change

Entrol Flight Simulator

The arrival of the H145 helicopters has significantly increased training requirements.

Rescue pilots across all bases must now be certified and rated to fly the H145, which includes advanced avionics and Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) capability. Traditionally, this training consumed valuable fuel and involved the costly and inefficient process of taking pilots and helicopter away from active service availability.



To date, with community support, the Trust has paid approximately \$1 million as a first payment on an Entrol Flight Simulator. The next payment to fully secure the purchase is \$1.5m. We need your help to make this a reality!



Investing in a simulator reduces training risk, improves efficiency, lowers costs, and enhances overall readiness for the H145 fleet. It provides a more sustainable solution, which enables pilots to train safely, effectively, and at a fraction of the cost.

A key advantage of having the simulator housed at the Christchurch Emergency Aviation Base is that it allows pilots to complete flight and navigation training and instrument flight training during their shifts without affecting operational readiness.

The simulator can also replicate a wide range of scenarios repeatedly, including high-risk exercises such as boat rescues, and hazardous scenarios that would be impossible to conduct safely in the real-world environment.

This purchase will fast-track the pilot training and critical incident/emergency response simulations, which ultimately enhance patient care outcomes.

Entrol Winch Simulator

The Entrol simulator is equipped with a Mixed Reality Hoist Operator Station which allows the winch operator to do a large part of their training on-base, in realistic environments. This gives the crew the opportunity to improve the communication between the winch operator and the pilot as well as training for critical situations.

The system uses mixed reality goggles, winch cables that move through 4 dimensions, and customisable scenarios.

This will be game-changing for crew training.



The Final Stage: we need your help

MISSION 2026 and the transformation of our rescue helicopter service is truly taking flight. Thanks to the incredible support of our community, this ambitious initiative is already well underway.

At this final stage, we need to raise an additional **\$600,000** to get the new H145 helicopters fully commissioned and operational as quickly as possible. Every day these helicopters are delayed is a day lives across our region may be at greater risk.

These state-of-the-art helicopters, equipped with advanced avionics and life-saving medical technology, will allow our rescue teams to respond faster, more safely, and more effectively than ever before. Your support ensures that paramedics and pilots can reach those in urgent need, wherever they are.

This is more than an investment in helicopters; it's an investment in saving lives. We are asking our community to join us in this critical final push. The new rescue helicopters are ready to make a difference - now we need your help to make it happen.

We welcome one-off donations or pledges of any amount. Every contribution will help bring these transformative initiatives to life, raising the standard of care and saving more lives across the region.

Will you join us in making a difference?



More Information?

Please get in touch with me, Kathryn Marshall, for more information about becoming a **MISSION 2026** supporter.

It would be lovely to show you around the base or I can come to see you; whichever is easiest.

Thank you
Kathryn Marshall
Fundraising & Development Director



Phone: 021 224 1474

Email: kathryn@airrescue.co.nz



More information and ways to donate:

Via online banking: 03 0823 0216240 00

Via our website: www.airrescue.co.nz/mission2026

Via telephone: 03 358 8244

Canterbury West Coast Air Rescue Trust
Charities Services registration number CC23893