



His pilot uniform is North Pole approved!



# Fly Santa, fly!

The bush pilot brings festive fun to remote communities.



## DAVID SPREADS CHRISTMAS CHEER ACROSS REGIONAL OZ

**D**uring the scorching summer in the Australian outback, Santa doesn't arrive on a sleigh – he soars in on a single-engine Cessna 182.

For 20 years, Pastor David Shrimpton has made his way to isolated towns across Australia, offering holiday cheer and a listening ear.

'Padre Dave' – as he is known – says his flights

cover more than 225,000 square kilometres. He stops at one-pub towns, sheep and cattle stations, Indigenous communities, and schools with just a handful of students.

"I visit these people all year but its more exciting around Christmas time because the kids are telling me what they want Santa to bring them,"

David, 60, tells New Idea.

"A lot of those people living remotely are doing it tough and I just come in as a listening ear.

"Whether that's sitting around having

a cuppa or going for a drive around their property, I let them know they are not forgotten."

David lives in Broken Hill, NSW, and says his unique occupation came about by accident.

He was posted to a church

trips to approximately three remote towns.

He says he's occasionally called upon to assist with rounding up cattle or sheep.

Although his career started unexpectedly, David loves being in the air and can't imagine life

*'I let them know they're not forgotten'*

near an airport in South Australia. After spotting an advertisement for flying lessons, he signed up on a whim and soon found himself flying as part of his ministry.

Since assuming his position in the Broken Hill congregation in 2014, David has made weekly

any other way.

"I love this type of work because of the people you meet and get to know," he adds.

"It's even more special at Christmas because it's a time to gather as a family and celebrate good times."

By Megan Rowe



David has been interested in flying ever since he was a child.