

Corporal Rhys Mitchell, 24, grew up in Albury and joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 2002 to travel and meet new people.

After two years of basic and specialist training, Rhys now works as an Avionics Supervisor at Number 77 Squadron RAAF Base Williamtown, Newcastle.

Rhys was promoted to Corporal in November 2006 and with that came new responsibilities as an Avionics Supervisor on the F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets.

“I love that every day is different and you never know what to expect when you turn up for work,” Rhys said.

“The work ethic and team environment at 77 Squadron make it the premier jet fighter squadron in the Air Force,” Rhys said.

“It is great to be working on the jets, both in Australia and overseas. They are the tip of the sword in the Air Force”.

Rhys has been on several high complexity air combat training exercises, including Pitch Black; Bersama Shield in Singapore; and Operation Acolyte, the Australian Defence Force contribution to providing security to the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

But, Rhys is enjoying many new challenges during his first time on Exercise Talisman Sabre at RAAF Base Townsville, far north Queensland.

“It is great to be able to get away with a really good bunch of guys from 77 Squadron and get the jets in the air for the exercise,” CPL Mitchell said.

“Being on exercise Talisman Sabre 2007 means we get to put our skills into practice in an operational environment and experience the different challenges that being on an exercise entails,” Rhys said.

Talisman Sabre is a biennial exercise that provides the Royal Australian Air Force with the opportunity to train with some 20 000 United States Air Force, Navy and Marines, while focusing on the operational level planning and conduct of high end warfighting.

About 7500 Australian military personnel participate in the intensive training period of sea, air and land battles that run from 10 June to 2 July this year.

As well as the aircraft operating out of Townsville, there are also a range of aircraft in Rockhampton, Amberley, Brisbane and Williamtown, along with aircraft carriers and soldiers in a variety of locations around Australia.

“It is awesome to be able to get out into the community. I love being able to do my job whilst travelling around Australia and overseas,” Rhys said.

Rhys has aspirations to become a Flight Test Engineer and work on the Joint Strike Fighter aircraft in the future.

“I enjoy maintaining the complex electronic and weapons systems on the jets, so a transition to the Joint Strike Fighter would be great when Australia receive the new platform,” Rhys said.

Rhys graduated from Murray High School in 2001 and played for the Lavington Football Club until he joined the Air Force. Rhys also enjoys team sports and diving.

Parents, Bruce and Margaret, are proud of Rhys' achievements since he left Albury to join the Air Force, but are looking forward to see their youngest when he returns home next.

Older brother Serge works as a psychologist and sister Simone owns Hudson's Coffee Shop in Albury.

Rhys is looking forward to getting back to Albury in July this year to welcome the anticipated arrival of Serge's first child.

For more information on joining the Royal Australian Air Force contact 13 19 01 or check out www.defencejobs.gov.au

Story by Flying Officer Skye Smith

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<i>Drafted by:</i>	FLGOFF Skye Smith	SRG PAO	21 Jun 07
<i>Cleared by:</i>	WGCDR Tim Churchill	CO 77SQN	22 Jun 07
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