

Pilot Officer Martin Ferguson, 20, grew up in Mareeba and joined the Air Force in 2005 to fulfil his passion for aviation.

Becoming an Air Traffic Controller meant Marty could have fun and travel Australia at the same time.

Marty now works as a Tower Controller at RAAF Base Townsville, Far North Queensland, after nearly two years of basic Officer and specialised training.

Marty enjoys working in the unique team environment at Townsville. “We all work together to solve difficult scenarios and at the end of the day we keep aircraft and people safe”.

As an Air Traffic Controller, Marty spends his day facilitating safe and expeditious operations for different types of aircraft, both civil and military.

Marty has experienced various challenges as an Air Traffic Controller during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2007.

The four-week intensive training period of sea, air and land battles has provided Marty with his first opportunity to put his skills to use on an exercise.

“My day is completely different depending on the flying programme set out by the Air Force squadrons involved in the exercise, as well as the normal civilian aircraft that come in and out of the Townsville airport,” Marty 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 are participating around Australia in the nation’s largest exercise that runs from 10 June to 2 July this year.

“On any given day of the exercise, there is the possibility to control both Australian and American Hornet jets, B707 tankers, C-17s, Blackhawks and H-47s, just to name a few,” Marty said.

The best part of the exercise for Marty is controlling different types of aircraft that do not usually operate out of Townsville, as well as working closely with foreign operators.

But, controlling a mixture of military and civilian aircraft in the same airspace can be quite challenging, according to Marty.

“The variety and volume of traffic for the exercise and inclement weather, mixed with the mountainous terrain of Townsville all contribute to the unique experience of controlling aircraft during the exercise,” Marty said.

Number 44 Wing Detachment Townsville has 57 personnel, making it Australia's second busiest military air traffic control centre.

“My team at Townsville are first class. We look after each other in the Tower and have fun whenever possible”.

Highlights of Marty's career to date include graduating from the School of Air Traffic at RAAF Base East Sale, as well as gaining his first Tower rating at Townsville.

Marty returns home to Mareeba to go camping and fishing whenever he gets time off work.

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
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