AIR FORCE
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SPECIAL EDITION

THEY’RE HERE

F-35A aircraft A35-009 arrives at RAAF Base Williamtown.
Photo: SGT Shane Gidall

F-35A arrival dawn of a new era in air combat

Pages 2-3; special lift-out inside
F-35A Arrival

Every Air Force member is part of this transformation.

CAF AIRMSHL Leo Davies

Two F-35A aircraft over the Hopi Reservation, Arizona, US, in their preparation for their journey to Australia.

Photos: CPL Dan Pinhorn

A KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport aircraft prepares to refuel an F-35A aircraft en route to Australia.

DECADES of hard work came to fruition when Australia’s first two F-35A aircraft arrived at their new home – RAAF Base Williamtown – on December 10.

A large crowd gathered at Williamtown to witness the historic arrival, which opens the next chapter in Air Force’s fifth-generation transformation.

Five pilots flew 15,977km to get A35-009 and A35-010 home from Arizona’s Luke Air Force Base. They were supported by KC-30A tankers, maintainers, logisticians, administration, life support and security staff.

CAF AIRMSHL Leo Davies praised the work of everyone involved in the largest acquisition in Air Force’s history.

“The F-35A is not just a fifth-generation fighter, with speed, agility and advanced information systems; it is a catalyst to transforming us into a fifth-generation fighting force,” AIRMSHL Davies said.

“While it’s a modest beginning – starting with just two jets, a dozen pilots and 40 maintainers – these two aircraft represent the transformation of our air combat force.

“We are evolving our workforce, our organisational structure and the way we train and force generate; every Air Force member is part of this transformation.”

AIRMSHL Davies said the acquisition of the F-35A signified a catalyst for a change of thinking as “an integrated ADF is greater than the sum of its parts”.

“The F-35A is a communications node capable of sharing information between key areas of the ADF in real time,” he said.

“As our previous CAF said, the JSF replaces nothing, but it changes everything.

“Everyone working on this jet is critical to operational success and that team will be at the leading edge of technology while flying and maintaining this aircraft.

“To the F-35As in RAAF colours, welcome.”

Defence Minister Christopher Pyne said the aircraft would provide a major boost to Air Force’s combat edge.

“This is the most advanced multi-role stealth fighter in the world,” Mr Pyne said.

“The JSF is the largest acquisition in the history of the RAAF, and is a key part of the government’s $200 billion build up in Defence capability.

“It will deliver next generation capability benefits and provide a major boost to our intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.”
**End of Year Messages**

**CAF AIRMSHL LEO DAVIES**

S THIS year comes to an end, it is reasonable for us to reflect on what we have achieved individually and as a team. While 2018 started with the return of the Air Task Group Strike Element from Operation Okra, we have of course continued our commitment and success on operations in the Middle East. We have also been called upon to support our regional partners in Tonga, Indonesia, PNG and the Philippines and have conducted successful airdrops into Antarctica. Our partnerships with industry, engagements with our international and regional allies and participation in major joint exercises have all grown in both complexity and maturity.

This year has also seen the completion of the C-27J Spartan fleet, unveiling of the new PC-21 Roulettes colour scheme and government announcements for the acquisition of the MQ-4C Triton and MA-9 remotely piloted aerial systems. The transition of AP-3C Orions to R-8A Poseidon continues and our first two F-35A aircraft arrived to their home base at Williamtown.

This year demonstrated that we are responsive, agile and innovative. We are well down the path of transforming into a fifth-generation Air Force. 2018 has been just as challenging as last year, but your efforts have kept pace and we have continued to deliver over where and when it is needed. Most importantly, I know it’s not easy for your families. They have to cope with you being away on exercises, deployments or working unpredictable hours. Without the support of your families, we as an Air Force, wouldn’t have been able to achieve what we have. It’s a difficult task for them.

So to you, the families, the partners, the children and extended families, please accept mine and my wife Rhonda’s thanks for what you do for your Air Force.

Significantly for those of you on deployment, I see the pride you have in your work when I visit, but it is tough at this time of the year. Presents in the mail early and lots of calls will help a bit, but you must know that we are all very proud of your commitment.

To everyone in the Air Force family, please enjoy the festive season, travel safely and come back refreshed and invigorated for the new year. Merry Christmas!

AM continually impressed by the commitment, calibre and professionalism of the wonderful men and women who make up the Air Force. I would like to thank everyone for their efforts this year, whether on operations or exercises, in training or in support. Over the past 12 months we have continued to deliver at home and abroad, capstone our missions while upholding our reputation as a highly trained and professional defence force.

I am proud of the significant assistance the ADF has provided internationally this year; from humanitarian and following the Tongan tropical cyclone and Indonesian tsunami, to assisting the Iraqis in their fight against a terrorist insurgency.

Further, we have continued to support train, advise and assist efforts in Afghanistan and contributed to the global light against terrorism through engagement with the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The ADF support to the Invictus Games in Sydney and APEC Leaders’ Week in Papua New Guinea were also notable events in 2018.

**DGCHAP-APRICAL PRINCIPAL AIR CHAPLAIN MARK WILLIS**

I T’S THE middle of October as I begin writing this message ... my daughter-in-law has her Christmas tree up; stores have started selling decorations and I even heard some carols playing. A mate posted a meme on social media that said: ‘There are only 12 days of Christmas! And none of them are in November.’ So this got me thinking.

What does this season mean? Or what does this season make you feel? I am mindful and sad about this time of the year.

The tempo during 2018 has been non-stop, and all indicators are that this ‘busy-ness’ is the new norm. Across Air Command the transition to new platforms and capabilities continues to progress well – in fact, an early Christmas present is in the arrival of our first F-35A aircraft to RAAF Base Williamtown. Air Command WOFC Fiona Gravett and I have been fortunate to visit almost all bases throughout 2018 and continue to be impressed by the commitment, knowledge and skill of our women and men. Air Force has conducted short-notice operations, responded to a number of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief events throughout our region, and participated in record numbers of exercises and operations domestically, regionally and globally.

The conduct of Exercise Pitch Black 18 – the largest of its type to date, with 12 countries participating this year – was our most successful international engagement exercise exercise observed at home and abroad, capturing our support to Operation APEC 18 Assist in PNG. It has been a hectic but very important way to wind up a busy year. Your efforts through 2018 have been enormous – and worth it. Air Force’s reputation for excellence, and Australia’s goal of being a ‘partner of choice’ within our region, have been greatly enhanced.

Thank you for your service. For those changing jobs or moving on – good luck. Personally, I continue to enjoy my time as ACAUST. I am humbled by the experiences and capacity of our people, and my confidence in the quality of our women and men has been reinforced.

Both WOFC Gravett and I certainly appreciate the support we have enjoyed this year at HQAC. For those who can, please take as much of a break over the Christmas period as possible. You deserve it and 2019 looks just as fun and challenging.

So, genuinely from myself, my wife Libby and family; Merry Christmas, happy holidays, and please return safely in 2019.

**CAUST AVIE STEVE ROBERTSON**

THAT IS THE last edition of Air Force news for 2018. Content for the first edition of 2019 – published on February 7 – must be submitted by January 23. We wish all our readers and contributors a safe and merry festive season. Thank you all for your continued support.

**CDF GEN ANGUS CAMPBELL**

SEE YOU IN 2019

THIS IS THE last edition of Air Force news for 2018. Content for the first edition of 2019 – published on February 7 – must be submitted by January 23. We wish all our readers and contributors a safe and merry festive season. Thank you all for your continued support.
A fitting tribute to the P-3 Orion, which has been our watchful eye for five decades

50 grand years

FLTLT Tom Maclean

THREE AP-3C Orions have performed a low-level formation flight over Adelaide to thank the community for its support of the aircraft and associated personnel and operations since 1968.

The flyover was part of No. 92 Wing’s celebration of 50 years of Air Force P-3 Orion service. A ceremony, family day and formal dinner in Adelaide were also on the agenda.

CDR Surveillance and Response Group AIRCDRE Craig Heap said it was the Air Force’s privilege to put on a display for residents.

“We are incredibly proud of our connection with the Adelaide community,” AIRCDRE Heap said.

“It is a relationship Air Force values not only for our serving members but for our families, who have continued to be welcomed and embraced.”

“The flyover was a fitting tribute to 50 years of P-3 Orion service in the Air Force, and a way to thank the Adelaide community for their support over half a century.”

The official ceremony at RAAF Base Edinburgh included the flyover followed by a handling display from a P-8A Poseidon.

Many community and industry leaders and foreign military personnel attended the ceremony, which included a formal address from CAF AIRMSHL Leo Davies.

On December 1, 92WG hosted a family day at Edinburgh, where static and flying displays attracted hundreds of people.

That night, almost 1000 past and present members involved with Orions over five decades shared stories amid the memorabilia displays and slide shows marking the aircraft’s long list of achievements.

The events allowed members to gather and reflect on the efforts of thousands of people who have contributed their skills to keeping the fleet flying.

Warrant Officer Engineering WOFF Nick Hanna, of No. 19 Squadron, thanked the many maintenance personnel who have worked with P-3s and ensured the platform’s success.

“They have done a dedicated and tireless job and always stepped up to any challenge – keeping P-3s in the air and ready for operations at home and across the world,” WOFF Hanna said.

The AP-3C Orion is in the process of a graduated drawdown to retirement. The final aircraft is scheduled for withdrawal in 2023.

The AP-3C will be replaced by the P-8A Poseidon and MQ-4C Triton, which will perform the vital functions of long-range maritime patrol.

While most of the AP-3C fleet will be retired by the end of 2018, Air Force will retain two AP-3C aircraft in service to ensure the ADF retains sufficient airborne surveillance capability until the arrival of the first MC-Q4 Triton.

These two AP-3C aircraft were modified in the United States to include enhanced electronic support measures systems and high capacity satellite communications. They look different to the retiring AP-3C variant.

92WG will maintain its investment in the residual AP-3C Orion force, both in terms of the professional mastery of the remaining workforce and in platform sustainment.

Those that remain with the AP-3C (EW) platform until it retires will have a unique privilege, responsibility and place in history.
Drone does a top job

Eamon Hamilton

ROUTINE servicing of the colossal C-17A Globemaster at RAAF Base Amberley’s No. 36 Squadron is now receiving help from a “Phantom”. The squadron has introduced the DJI Phantom 4 drone to inspect hard-to-reach areas of the C-17A, reducing height risks to personnel and helping to build a “history” of damage to an aircraft.

CDR Air Mobility Group AIRCDRE William Kourelakos said the idea came from within the unit. “This is an excellent example of bottom-led innovation from 36SQN in response to the Air Force Safety Always Program (ASAP),” he said. 

“Introducing this drone and these procedures goes further to reducing workplace health and safety risks. “AMG is investigating its applicability across the Air Mobility fleet.”

36SQN Senior Engineering Officer SQNLDR Evan Smith said the drone was introduced with help from Royal Australian Artillery’s 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment. 

“The Army has extensive experience using this model and managing the information downloaded from it. We manage the drone through a stand-alone laptop, and have been able to adapt Army’s practices to suit our needs,” he said. 

“The drone’s value is being demonstrated during the home station checks, a routine service conducted on each C-17A every 180 days. Part of the check involves inspecting paint or other surface damage, including to the tail section, nearly 17 metres above ground.

Until now, the maintenance team has used platforms or climbed through a tunnel in the vertical stabiliser to check the tail section. 

SQNLDR Smith said the drone could be used to conduct the surveys in as little as 30 minutes. “This helps the aircraft surface finishers to identify and track paint degradation on the upper surface of the C-17A, triage paint defects and plan remediation work,” he said.

Imagery is shot in high-resolution stills and video and can be provided to agencies including the Heavy Airlift Systems Program Office, Boeing and Defence Science and Technology. 

This imagery allows an airframe’s history of paint degradation or surface damage to be charted and compared across the fleet. SQNLDR Smith said the unit would “investigate expanding our use of the drone to include other upper-surface inspections”.

Innovative way of capturing images from above reduces workplace risk

Eamon Hamilton

Within the span of two recent C-17A fleet workovers at RAAF Base Amberley, the Air Force has quickly increased its aerial refuelling capability.

The Royal Australian Air Force has recently fitted a pair of C-130J Hercules aircraft with new external fuel tanks that will boost the aircraft’s range, providing the Air Force with increased flexibility.

CDR AMG AIRCDRE William Kourelakos said the utility of these fuel tanks will be explored in December, with A97-440 expected to support Operation Christmas Drop in Guam.

The C-130J was introduced to RAAAF service in 1999 without external fuel tanks due to its engines being more efficient and powerful than those that powered earlier generations of Hercules.

EAMCD Kourelakos said Operation Christmas Drop involves the delivery of donated gifts including food, clothing and toys to remote island communities in the West Pacific.

“Some of these missions are to islands more than 2000km from Guam, where there’s very limited options to divert in the event of an emergency,” AIRCDRE Kourelakos said.

“Carrying that extra fuel would make some aspects of mission planning easier, allow crews to deliver to more island communities, or increase the amount of time loitering at a drop zone.”

Tanks to offer that extra mile

Eamon Hamilton

EXTERNAL fuel tanks will be installed on a pair of C-130J Hercules transport aircraft, boosting the Air Mobility Group’s workhorse ability to perform a range of missions.

The first aircraft to receive these tanks – serial A97-440 – was handed over to No. 37 Squadron at RAAF Base Richmond in November, after routine scheduled maintenance from Airbus Group Australia Pacific.

The tanks increase the fuel capacity from 19 tonnes to 27 tonnes. CDR AMG AIRCDRE William Kourelakos said the utility of these fuel tanks would be explored in a variety of missions.

“Extra fuel is useful during forward arming and refuelling point operations, where the crew land and offload fuel to another aircraft, vehicle or storage tank,” AIRCDRE Kourelakos said.

“The fuel tanks can also extend range or endurance during certain missions, allowing us to be more persistent in an area such as search and rescue missions.

“Carrying that extra fuel brings weight and drag considerations, so fitting these two aircraft will determine how these tanks might benefit our future airlift operations.”

Previous models of the Hercules were equipped with external fuel tanks but the tanks fitted to these two aircraft have been newly constructed.

The C-130J was introduced to RAAAF service in 1999 without external fuel tanks due to its engines being more efficient and powerful than those that powered earlier generations of Hercules.

The utility of these fuel tanks will be explored in December, with A97-440 expected to support Operation Christmas Drop in Guam. Hosted by the United States Pacific Air Forces, Operation Christmas Drop involves the delivery of donated gifts including food, clothing and toys to remote island communities in the West Pacific.
Eamon Hamilton

VETERANS have joined Air Force members to celebrate 60 years of C-130 Hercules operations in Australia.

The first Air Force C-130A was handed over in the US in November 1958 and touched down at RAAF Base Richmond on December 13, 1958.

CDR Air Mobility Group AIRCDRE William Kourelakos said Hercules crews had been involved with almost every major Defence operation since then.

“We’ve recorded more than 830,000 flying hours with four models of the Hercules, all without major accident,” he said.

“That record of safety and accomplishment has been made possible by thousands of men and women in Defence and industry, on the ground and in the air.”

Up to 140 past members of the C-130 Hercules community visited RAAF Base Richmond, the Hercules' home for six decades, on November 23.

The Hercules has been a lifeline to Defence operations in Vietnam, South-East Asia and the Middle East, and to peacekeeping missions in the South Pacific and Africa.

It has delivered humanitarian relief and evacuated survivors in the wake of disasters such as Cyclone Tracy, the Boxing Day tsunami and, most recently, in Palu, Indonesia.

Since 1958, Air Force has flown 48 Hercules airframes across four models and now operates a fleet of 12 C-130J Hercules that were introduced to service in 1999.

“Over nearly 20 years, the J-model has received communications and self-protection upgrades that allows it to deliver in tough environments,” AIRCDRE Kourelakos said.

“Even with the introduction of newer transports like the Globemaster and Spartan, the C-130 Hercules and its workforce have proven the airlift platform of choice in our region.”
FLGOFF Bel Scott

CAF AIRMSHL Leo Davies highlighted the achievements of the Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU), which celebrated 75 years of continuous service during a ceremony at RAAF Base Edinburgh on November 30.

AIRMSHL Davies joined past and present members who attended the formal event which celebrated ARDU’s flight test capability development that spans more than seven decades.

Personnel paraded with the unit’s colours in front of the iconic ARDU F-111 and a fleet of three PC-9/A aircraft while past members proudly stood to attention.

ARDU CO WGCDR Dan Rich said it was pleasing to see so many past members who recognised the unit’s history and contribution to flight test.

WGCDR Rich said the location of the parade at the ARDU hangar had a special meaning.

“Decades of work by the women and men of ARDU have taken place in the hangar. Who knew what would have been inside this hangar on any given day?” WGCDR Rich said.

“Trials being undertaken by the unit in 1943 are a good indication of the diverse and important duties being undertaken by the unit then, which continues to this day.

“From our flight test pilots and engineers to our support personnel, their integrated work with other FEGs (Force Element Groups) and organisations have set a positive example for collaboration into the future.”

“This anniversary celebrates the proud history of ARDU in all its forms across its entire era: aircrew and non-aircrew alike.

“Today, ARDU continues this legacy as an integral unit of the test and evaluation directorate within the Air Warfare Centre.”

ARDU origins stem from WWII and Air Force’s need to keep pace with local aircraft production and research and development activities.

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“Today, ARDU continues this legacy as an integral unit of the test and evaluation directorate within the Air Warfare Centre.”

Since its formation, ARDU has operated and tested almost all aircraft in Air Force service, including the Meteor, Canberra bomber, Sabre, Mirage, Macchi, Kiowa, CT4, Dakota, F-111 and the Hornets.

In the past four years the unit has tested Air Force’s EA-18G Growler, F/A-18 Hornets, E-7A Wedgetail, KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport, C-27J Spartan and C-130J Hercules.

Aside from aircraft, ARDU has tested a diverse range of weapons, such as the ASRAAM, AGM-142 and JASSM.

WGCDR Rich said ARDU would continue to conduct test and evaluation as Air Force develops its fifth-generation capability.

Above: CAF AIRMSHL Leo Davies reviews the Aircraft Research and Development Unit’s 75th anniversary parade at RAAF Base Edinburgh.
More support for ADF members and families

From January 2019, ADF members and their family will be given greater access to support services during their career, and when they decide to transition from Defence to civilian life.

Job Search Preparation workshops will be available for all members at any point in their career. Funding through Defence’s Partner Employment Assistance Program will be extended to support partners of members medically transitioning. A contribution to the cost of financial advice will also be available for those transitioning.

There is a mandatory process that you need to go through when transitioning from Defence so plan early. Contact your local ADF Transition Centre for more information.

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**Fine timing for finale**

**FLTLT Bettina Mears**

IN HIS last performance as an aerial display pilot, FLTLT Matt Trayling thrilled the crowds at the Newcastle 500 Supercars event when he flew his F/A-18A Hornet low over pit straight in precise timing with the finale of the national anthem.

The display pilot and instructor from No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit was part of an Air Force presence, along with Navy and Army, at the event on the NSW central coast from November 23 to 25.

Together they showcased technology and teamwork at the dedicated ADF Precinct at Pacific Park in Newcastle City.

Supercars fans tested their skills as fast-jet pilots at the Air Force Simulator Experience trailer and browsed through capability displays. XO RAAF Base Williamtown and CO No. 26 Squadron WOCDR Amanda Cornell said it was an important opportunity to engage with the local community.

“I am proud to say we received an overwhelming response from visitors to the ADF precinct over the Supercars weekend, with children and families highly engaged in the interactive displays.

“It was also a humbling experience, with members of the community acknowledging the base’s recent support to managing the local fire threat in the Port Stephens area.”

An F/A-18A Hornet flies over the Newcastle 500 Supercars event, while (inset) LAC James Evans, of 1SECFOR, fits a helmet onto racegoer Lachlan, 8.

Photos: CPL Nicci Freeman

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We’ll even manage your trade-in to make sure the changeover is seamless.

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The return of the WWI ‘Harry Tates’ at RAAF Museum

Worth the 100-year wait

WO RAAF Museum pilots became the first Australian military pilots to fly an RE8 aircraft in 100 years. FLTLT Chris Tulk and WOCDR Warren Madsen flew the RE8, an aircraft that is colloquially known as ‘Harry Tates’, named after a popular British performer around WWI.

The museum’s RE8 is a reproduction of the original aircraft, with all parts built to original specifications. The flight was conducted at RAAF Base Point Cook in October.

FLTLT Tulk said the RE8 was a delight to fly and he felt privileged to have had that opportunity. “Overall the aircraft is very stable despite not having some more modern aerodynamic design features such as differential ailerons,” FLTLT Tulk said.

“The field of view is excellent, which would have contributed to its operational success in observation and reconnaissance roles. I’m in awe of the comparatively inexperienced Australian Flying Corps (AFC) aircrew who used the aircraft to such good effect in combat.

“I believe their skill, daring and innovation are the foundation of our modern air capability.”

RAAF Museum Director David Gardner said the RE8 had an interesting service history.

Mr Gardner said the aircraft played a significant role in the AFC during WWI.

“The AFC operated 135 RE8 aircraft including 11 aircraft with No. 1 Squadron in the Middle East, 104 aircraft with No. 3 Squadron over the Western Front and 20 aircraft with No. 7 Squadron in the United Kingdom,” Mr Gardner said. “The ‘RE’ in the aircraft’s name stands for reconnaissance experimental. Designed and built by the Royal Aircraft Factory, the RE8 was broadly employed as a bomber, reconnaissance, and artillery observation aircraft from 1917 to the end of WWI.

“More than 4000 RE8s experienced Allied service in a wide range of theatres.”

The museum’s RE8 features the livery of No. 3 Squadron AFC. That squadron’s most notable aircraft was A4397, ‘Sylvia’, which was flown by CAPT Reg Francis, who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his contribution in the Battle of Hamel on July 4, 1918.

The RE8 will fly as part of public interactive flying displays at RAAF Base Point Cook. The aircraft is also likely to be displayed at the Avalon International Airshow in 2019.
DIGGING DEEP TO STAY ALERT

An airbase recovery squadron stands up to the test during Exercise Regal Burrow.

FLTLT Chloe Stevenson reports

A natural disaster has struck and No. 65 Squadron has been stand-up to help keep an airbase operating.

This was the scenario when electronic plotters, plan operators, aerial engineers, carpenters and electricians enhanced deployed personnel from 65SQN were deployed to an austere site at Defence Establishment Orchard Hills for Exercise Regal Burrow from 14 to 28 December 2018.

Reconnaissance, sustain and maintain resilient airbase infrastructure in the disaster-affected area is to enable aircraft operations.

65SQN Aerial Engineering Officer FLGOFF Blake Fumberger said his first exercise since joining Air Force demonstrated what 65SQN could achieve when put to the test in a dynamic environment.

“65SQN deployed in a standard humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) scenario, which was a huge success,” he said.

“We were conducting airbase recovery so we repaired the runway. We had a building stuck in the middle of the runway and it needed to be fixed. We also had a subject to get fuel to the runway for the aircraft to fly in and out.”

While this was going on, we experienced a threat environment and a constructed force protection structures, such as anadel for the debris to keep our people and the locals safe.”

65SQN Electrical LAC, Matthew Magner said it was a great opportunity to hone his trade skills.

“When we arrived there was no power, no running water, devastation everywhere,” LAC McMahon said.

“We went through and identified power and water, we repaired the infrastructure and installed new lighting fixtures for the local area. We also cleared drainage issues from the buildings and the area. We had a high level of explosive remnants of war and we were able to assist in their removal.”

65SQN’s explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) unit is critical to our success,” he said.

“We were conducting airbase engineering in conjunction with the EOD and the EOD found items and either remove to a safe location or detonate in place,” LACW Magner said.

“We were also called out to assist in the reconnaissance of improvised explosive device attacks as well as to support teams experiencing indirect fire.”

“Being an electrician in the deployed environment is important because your skills are valued, especially in a situation such as this where there is a strong reliance on field generators for power supply and maintaining communication capabilities.”

LAC McMahon said Regal Burrow was a great chance to learn about other trades from 65SQN personnel and their role in an airbase recovery operation.

“For me, having more experience with the generators was a bonus,” he said.

“We had a building stuck in the middle of the runway and it needed to be fixed. We also had a subject to get fuel to the runway for the aircraft to fly in and out.”

“We were called out to assist in the recovery of improvised explosive device attacks as well as to support teams experiencing indirect fire.”

Armament Technician CPL Nick Young keeps a lookout during Exercise Regal Burrow.

Exercise Regal Burrow

AAC/ST LAC Steven Roberton has reinforced the need for home technical and trade skills in support of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations.

“The exercise was to re-establish an airfield in an austere site to enable aircraft operations,” he said.

“The site was located in a densely populated area and was used to accommodate operations where there was a strong reliance on field generators for power supply and maintaining communication capabilities.”

AAC/ST Roberton said the exercise was a great opportunity to learn about other trades from 65SQN personnel and their role in an airbase recovery operation.

“This year alone, Air Force has supported HADR operations in Tonga, Indonesia and PNG, to name just a few.”

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Disposd towards the job

For this leading aircraftwoman, joining Air Force was technically an easy decision, FLTLT Chloe Stevenson writes

With an interest in technical roles, LACW Bethany Magner always knew she wanted a career in the Air Force. She joined as an armament technician in 2013 and has now taken another big step in her career by qualifying as an explosive ordnance reconnaissance technician with No. 65 Squadron’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal Section.

“From a young age I was very interested in joining the Air Force. I was drawn to the more technical and maintenance roles,” LACW Magner said.

After finishing recruits, I studied at the RAAF School of Technical Training, qualifying as an armament technician before posting into No. 1 Squadron in 2014.”

During her time at 1SQN with the F/A-18F Super Hornets, she deployed to the Middle East on Operation Okra and took part in exercises such as Red Flag at Nellis Air Force Base in the United States.

Her duties combined aircraft maintenance with her specialised armament role.

“That consists of building and loading bombs, missiles and bullets, as well as countermasures on the aircraft and the testing of those systems. “The deployment on Operation Okra was very important to me as it was at the end of my time at 1SQN and being able to use the skills I’d learnt in a high-tempo operational role was really fulfilling.”

LACW Magner, who grew up in Canberra and Queanbeyan, is now posted to 65SQN at Defence Establishment Orchard Hills, where she has gained additional qualifications through courses such as Demolitions Operator and Explosive Ordnance Reconnaissance.

“The Demolitions Operator course qualifies you to dispose of any in-service Australian ordnance on any Australian ranges,” she said.

“Explosive Ordnance Reconnaissance authorises us to dispose of foreign and domestic explosive ordnance up to 160mm in diameter, not including guided or chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons.”

“Working in Explosive Ordnance Disposal here at Orchard Hills has been a goal of mine since having joined Air Force. It is a unique and interesting role in the Air Force.”

LACW Bethany Magner with the man transportable robot system TALON4, a remotely piloted vehicle, at Defence Establishment Orchard Hills. Photo: CPL Casey Forster

POSTED TO AMBERLEY, QLD?

LIFE IN THE RAAF

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First for families of fallen

FOR the first time, Air Force has hosted a reception to honour ADF members who have died in Afghanistan.

While the families of the 41 fallen soldiers usually commemorate their deaths at Army-led reunions every September, Air Force has recognised the importance of holding its own event.

Member Support Coordinator for RAAF Base Darwin WOFF Peter Trimble was one of the main organisers of the Air Force reception.

“I was directly involved in the repatriation of these soldiers during my time as Warrant Officer Engineering at No. 36 Squadron between 2006 and 2010,” WOFF Trimble said.

“For many of the soldiers’ families, their first interaction with the Air Force was the sight of a C-17A taxiing into Australia to hand their loved one.

“The RAAF Base Darwin Sergeants’ Mess hosted the reception and Air Force cadets from the local No. 801 Squadron waited on the families,” WOFF Trimble said.

“The families of the fallen appreciated the opportunity to share memories in an Air Force environment and they enjoyed the delicious food prepared by our RAAF Darwin mess staff,” WGGDR Parsons said.

“I look forward to continued Air Force involvement in the future.”

The Air Force reception was part of a memorable weekend for the families in Darwin that included a dinner reception at Robertson Barracks with CDF and Sir Angus Houston and a welcome reception with the Governor-General at Parliament House.

Firies’ park-and-fly base

FLTTLT Stephanie Anderson

In the fight against the bushfires that raged through the Queensland bushland in November, RAAF Base Amberley did its part by hosting an air tanker and a “bird-dog” lead aircraft from the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS).

The aircraft – organised by the National Aerial Fire Fighting Centre and operated by personnel from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), Queensland RFS, and the NSW RFS and National Parks and Wildlife Service – flew from Amberley for a week.

The Air Force base allowed quick and easy access to the south-east corner of Queensland.

QFES Air Operations Officer Matthew Harris said the services appreciated Amberley’s support of the last-minute arrangement.

“The strategic location of the base, the large apron and airstrip and access to water have all assisted in making this a successful operation for us,” he said.

Multiple areas on base have bent over backwards to support us and we’re very grateful for it.”

No. 23 Squadron provided working accommodation for the Queensland and NSW air operators, assisted in filling the aircraft with water for fire fighting, refuelled the two aircraft and coordinated parking space for them.

CO 23SQN WGGDR Mark Thompson said Amberley was conveniently positioned and had the facilities to allow the aircraft to conduct the maximum number of fire bombing missions per day.

“23SQN and the larger Amberley community is always postured to provide help to the local community and the state and federal emergency services,” he said.

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THE Afghan Air Force (AAF) is in the early stages of development, with training and development still in the early stages of development, which means they can’t do everything we would expect from a more developed force,” he said.

“They were often a case of explaining what exactly the Afghans have been trained to do and what they do well.”

FLTLT Burns, of No. 32 Squadron, has recently returned Australia after being embedded with the 438th Air Expeditionary Wing Train, Advise, Assist Command – Air (TAAC-Air) at Bagram Airfield.

As a liaison officer, he represented TAAC-Air for the AAF missions conducted in the Afghanistan area of operations. The AAF’s main attack aircraft are the A-29 Super Tucano and the MD-530 Cayuse Warrior, a small but lethal helicopter.

FLTLT Burns said the abilities of Afghan pilots had improved during the six months of his deployment. “Pilots of the Super Tucanos have the ability to use laser-guided bombs with extreme precision,” he said.

“They’ve vastly improved their bombing accuracy and can designate targets with a laser from another aircraft or work with air terminal controllers on the ground who can direct them to targets.

“There’s a lot of work behind this capability, such as the efforts by maintainers who assemble the bombs and fit them to the aircraft.

“With guidance from the TAAC-Air advisers, they’re also using time-delay mechanisms which allow a bomb to penetrate a building before exploding.”

An increase in reconnaissance platforms, such as the Scan Eagle and the Pilatus PC-12, has helped the Afghans perform aircraft operations.

The AAF is also able to plan and implement missions without NATO advisers. FLTLT Burns worked with Afghan liaison officers to help ensure this happened.

“I used the liaison officers to clarify information because they could quickly communicate with their headquarters,” he said.

“I also worked closely with the airspace manager to deconflict between coalition and Afghan priorities. One of our goals with the Resolute Support mission was to give the Afghans more opportunities to conduct their own missions, engage their own targets and achieve the effect they want.”

FLTLT Burns said his background as a King Air pilot was invaluable for the mission. “Apart from being able to provide advice on operations and sorties, it helped me integrate with coalition aircraft,” he said.

“Working in an environment where I was responsible for reporting on and representing an organisation I didn’t control, gave me the skills for managing expectations,” he said.

“There was pressure at times because everybody wants to help the Afghans immediately. We just wanted to get the job done.

“The issue was our tempo was drastically different to the Afghans. We’re there for only six to 10 months at a time, whereas the Afghans have been fighting there for the last 40 years.”

Afghanistan plans to triple the size of its air force in the coming five years as part of a modernisation program. About 160 UH-60 Black Hawks will be added, some with fixed-forward firing weapons, and new AC-208 Eliminator armed reconnaissance aircraft.

HEN Afghan aircraft were needed for operations, FLTLT Alexander Burns reported on their availability, capabilities and limitations, along with the best way they could be used for NATO’s train, advise and assist mission.

“The Afghan Air Force (AAF) is still in the early stages of development, which means they can’t do everything we would expect from a more developed force,” he said.

“It was often a case of explaining what exactly the Afghans have been trained to do and what they do well.”

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The winner is: our safety

INTEREST in the Air Force Safety Awards (AFSA) reached new heights after 35 nominations were received this year, according to HQAC Safety Headquarters Air Command WgCdr Russell Barton.

WgCdr Barton, who chaired the judging panel, said he was impressed by the quality of the nominees, with most of the categories being competitive.

“I am also encouraged by the level of support from our managers and commanders in recognising people of all ranks who positively contribute to the Air Force safety culture,” WgCdr Barton said.

HQAC Air Force Safety officer Sqnldr Greg Thomas said the wide range of nominations submitted for judging reflected the diversity of the Air Force community.

The nominees included junior enlisted personnel, senior officers, and embedded civilian personnel within formed units and project teams.

The awards are issued by CAF to recognise outstanding safety achievements.

Sqnldr Thomas said the awards were a priority because they encouraged the development of Air Force’s safety culture.

“With research identifying that regular recognition and praise can increase employee engagement and individual productivity, it can also improve retention rates and help reduce workplace incidents,” he said.

Sqnldr Thomas said many of the group and individual safety initiatives helped Air Force identify safer systems of work throughout the organisation.

“The 78WG Musculoskeletal Project Team initiatives, related to ‘aircrew injury prevention’, have led to wider considerations and dedicated resources being allocated within the Air Force Safety Always Program,” Sqnldr Thomas said.

“Recognising the great safety initiatives of our people is an important organisational commitment which I hope will continue to flourish.”

Nominations for 2019 are open and close on June 30, 2019. For more information visit the AFSA page on the Defence intranet.
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**IN BRIEF**

**Rolling out fast connections**

MORE than half of Defence’s sites have been connected to the NBN and the Chief Information Officer Group (CIOG) is working with NBN Co to ensure all bases are equipped with the high-speed internet infrastructure.

The NBN installation program is into its second year and many personnel now have access to the services but, due to the remoteness of some bases, it is expected to take about two more years to complete the rollout across all of Defence.

**More room in the inbox**

AN UPGRADE to the Microsoft Outlook email system early next year will provide most Defence staff with an inbox more than five times larger than its existing capacity.

Project Director End User Computing (EUC) Peter Higgs said everyone would be affected by the upgrade. “In addition to a larger inbox, there will be some changes in the coming months that people will need to start preparing for regarding how they store their emails,” he said.

The Way Outlook looks and operates will not change much, except for those who use a PST file to archive emails, since the industry is phasing out this format and PST files will eventually be locked. The EUC project team will help staff prepare and adapt to managing archive stores.

During the upgrade period, access to public folders and group mailboxes will be temporarily interrupted. More information can be found at http://drnet/CIOG/Projects/EUC/Mailbox/ Pages/Mailbox-Upgrade.aspx.

**Open to external navigation**

THE public will have access to information on how Defence is managing and regulating seaworthiness thanks to a new public website.

The Defence Seaworthiness Management System now includes a public internet site that allows access to material previously available only to internal audiences. Managed by the Office of the Defence Seaworthiness Regulator, the website has information about the roles and responsibilities for seaworthiness, how the assurance process works and how organisations comply with the system. The external website is available at defence.gov.au/seaworthiness and the internal site at dnet.defence.gov.au/seaworthiness.

**Season’s Greetings to all ADF members and their families from Toll Transitions**

If you are relocating over the next couple of months, here are some useful hints to help you on your way:

- Toll’s Your Defence Relocation Guide (available online at www.tollgroup.com/movemaestro/defence) will help you to understand your rights and responsibilities throughout your relocation. Please pay particular attention to Chapter 3 which provides you with the information you need to be appropriately prepared for your removal and Chapter 4 for full details of Toll’s Warranty Scheme including Repair, Like-for-like replacement & New replacement cover within predefined categories/ages.

- Download the Toll Move Plan App today from Google Play Store or Apple iTunes App store. The App gives you easy access to the details of your relocation itinerary. You can logon using the same valid username and password you use to access Toll Transitions’ website www.tollgroup.com/movemaestro/defence

- Please advise Toll if you have any change to your inventory or contact details.

- Your removal provider will contact you the day prior to pre-pack/uplift to confirm a start time. The contracted work hours are from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. Please contact Toll if you are concerned the uplift or delivery will not be completed within these hours.

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- Vehicles and tovables being freighted are not covered by Toll’s Warranty provisions. Check with your insurer to see if they are covered while in transit, otherwise you are advised to arrange your own insurance cover.

- Toll’s Warranty extends to cover the contents of cartons unpacked by you (excluding breakables and PBO items), PBO items are not covered except in the case of loss or obvious damage to the carton caused by the removalist - if there is, please ensure the carton is unpacked in your presence and damage noted on the eICR.
Introducing Jasper

Inspiring girls to think big

JASPER, a little girl who has big dreams of flying, is out to inspire girls’ interest in aviation and other STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) careers.

Air Force launched the animated character, who features in a promotional video, at the inaugural AIR4 Life STEM event for girls in Melbourne in late November.

As the voice of Jasper, SQNLDR Jacqueline Killian told the girls how she achieved her dream of joining Air Force through a mix of science, determination and courage.

Jasper was developed as a part of Plan Jericho in collaboration with the UTS Animal Logic Academy.

After the launch, 1400 schoolgirls experienced the thrills of Luna Park while discovering how they can have exciting careers in STEM areas.

More than 100 mentors from Air Force, Defence Science and Technology and Defence Science Institute, among others, mixed with the students on the rides and in dedicated technology areas, helping to give them a better understanding of interesting STEM job opportunities.

Only 16 per cent of STEM graduates are women and Defence is on a mission to increase this number.

DCAF AVM Gavin Turnbull said Air Force needed bright and creative minds for the future.

“Studying STEM at school will give you the best chance of success for digital-age opportunities. We have girls here who will one day become the next aerospace inventor, the next satellite engineer or a fast-jet pilot,” he said.

Head Aerospace Systems Division, AVM Cath Roberts encouraged the girls to think big.

“When I think of my career, I think of all those women and girls who missed out on having such amazing opportunities because they didn’t continue maths and science at school,” AVM Roberts said.

She said the arrival of the “stealthy and amazing” F-35A to Air Force offered career opportunities.

“If you think the cameras on smartphones are impressive, you should see what the F-35A can do,” AVM Roberts said.

See the video and more on Jasper at www.airforce.gov.au/jasper

ACW Su Kim fits an augmented reality headset to a student at the AIR4 event and launch of Jasper at Luna Park in Melbourne.

Photos: CPL Brenton Kwaterski

Reservists will have a new temporary promotions system in 2019 that recognises the localised nature of their service.

Personnel Branch staff found the existing system had led to dissatisfaction, as members selected for promotion are often unable to fill positions in other parts of Australia.

Director General Personnel – Air Force AIRCdre Geoffrey Harland said applying the full-time (Service Category, or SERCAT) 7 model to the reserve (SERCAT 5) workforce “makes little sense given the localised nature of service”.

Under the Total Workforce System we have the opportunity to consider options to achieve capability by recognising the reality of our workforce,” he said.

This interim process will provide the opportunity to create a reserve promotion process that rectifies deficiencies for implementation prior to the 2020 reserve promotion series.

Positions that may be identified and available for opt-in for promotion consideration in 2019 include ones currently filled by members on acting rank, who have a different rank and/or category to the positional requirements, and those with a planned date out of June or July 2019.

There will be a reduced number of targets next year, which will still enable reserve promotion opportunities. DORES-AF AIRCdre Robert Rodgers said he was committed to enhancing capability outputs in the future through a more decentralised reserve position and personnel management system, due to be introduced in time for the 2020 promotion rounds.

“This new model will provide greater flexibility and empowerment to commanders and provide more opportunities to reserve members,” he said.

“The proposed model will provide greater agility for commanders to ensure capability by positively managing the variations in conditions of service between full-time and reserve personnel.”

The DP-AF SharePoint and ForceNet pages will provide further updates and promulgate expressions of interest for positions as they become available.

Pilots set to start on new training system

FLTLT Tracey Li

THE new Pilot Training System being delivered under Project AIR5428 Phase 1 will be implemented at RAAF Base East Sale in the first quarter of next year.

OC Air Academy GPCAPT Dennis Tan recognised the continuous development of the project and was optimistic about the value this project could add to Air Force capability.

“The new Pilot Training System will better prepare ADF pilots to convert to the ADF’s fleet of highly advanced airborne platforms, including F-35A, Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter and MH-60R Seahawk,” GPCAPT Tan said.

“WE are confident the system will demonstrate its ability to increase pilot graduation numbers and generate the pilot skills necessary to operate highly advanced aircraft and meet the needs of ADF aviation for the next 30 years.”

GPCAPT Dennis Tan praised the team efforts behind Project AIR5428, including collaborations with industry. The new Pilot Training System aims to achieve final operational capability in December 2021.

THE Air Warfare Centre’s Innovation Hub showcased its new cool and interactive Digital Hub at the AIR4 event in Melbourne, giving young girls the chance to experience future Defence technologies such as augmented reality and HoloLens (holographic computer).

The Air Warfare Engineering Squadron displayed the non intrusive flight test instrument (NIFTI) to demonstrate the importance of engineering in developing aviation capability.

Squadron Engineer FLGOFF Alyssia Skellern said the event aimed to inspire the younger generation to look at flight, engineering, adventure and technology careers with Air Force.

“When I was going through high school, I didn’t get to attend any of these career events so it’s great to see the Air Force is interested in these young girls’ futures,” FLGOFF Skellern said.

“I think you can’t be what you can’t see. Getting women like me and other engineers out in front of these girls shows them they can be an engineer or a scientist. They can be anything they want to be.”

The voice of Jasper, SQNLDR Jacqueline Killian, with a cut-out of the character at the launch in Melbourne.

Photos: CPL Jesse Kane

Promotions to take differences into account

The DP-AF SharePoint and ForceNet pages will provide further updates and promulgate expressions of interest for positions as they become available.
LAC Shane Brown and SGT Kane O’Connor, who have both been recognised with Pumper of the Month awards for their efforts in refuelling coalition aircraft, on duty in the Middle East.

Photo: SGT Mark Daran

Handler ACW Annari De Jonge, with her military working dog Dawn, during Operation APEC 18 Assist in PNG.

Photo: AB Kieren Whiteley

From left, AC Jordan Lickley, LAC Rohan Williams and CPL Melanie Nazarian check out the latest “Welcome to” magazines for the Air Force bases.

Photo: CPL Casey Forster

AC Cameron Redpath, of 1SECFOR, helps racegoer Rebecca don combat body armour during the Newcastle 500 Supercars race in November.

Photo: CPL Nicci Freeman

1Sqn Avionics Technician LAC Chris Smith, loads a sonobuoy onto an AP-3C Orion prior to a mission from Royal Malaysian Air Force Base Butterworth.

Photo: SGT Pete Betts
**More support for ADF members and families**

From January 2019, ADF members and their family will be given greater access to support services during their career, and when they decide to transition from Defence to civilian life.

Job Search Preparation workshops will be available for all members at any point in their career. Funding through Defence’s Partner Employment Assistance Program will be extended to support partners of members medically transitioning.

A contribution to the cost of financial advice will also be available for those transitioning.

There is a mandatory process that you need to go through when transitioning from Defence so plan early. Contact your local ADF Transition Centre for more information.

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**Heat and hills test the best**

**CPL Julia Whitwell**

PUSHING herself to new limits, WGCDR Liz Camilleri, of HQ Air Combat Group, represented the ADF Running and Athletics Association (ADFRAA) during a “hilly and hot” half-marathon in Lombok, Indonesia, on November 4.

WGCDR Camilleri, who finished fifth in her category, said the inaugural Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) Marathon stretched through the southern side of the island and challenged the team.

“All our team members agreed they were the most trying conditions we had ever encountered,” she said.

“It was humid, hot and the terrain was undulating and hilly. It showed in all our finish times.”

ADFRAA’s contingent of six included WGCDR Camilleri as Air Force’s only representative, along with three members from Navy and two from Army.

The event was ADFRAA’s last for the year before stand-down.

“The team had athletes in both the half and the full marathon,” WGCDR Camilleri said.

“We gave it our all on the day, cognisant that we were representing the ADF and wanting to do our service proud. I’m so proud of everyone’s effort.”

WGCDR Camilleri said the team was looking forward to more events in 2019.

“We are not elite runners but rather everyday ADF members with a passion for running,” she said.

“We’ll be keeping up our training during stand-down, so we can run straight into the events in the new year.”

The association provides funding for many events each year, including track and field competitions, fun runs and ultramarathons.

For more information, visit the ADFRAA page on the DRN: collab/vcdf/org/ADC/ADFSC/ADFRAA/SitePages/Home.aspx

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**Eagles second but satisfied**

THEY might not have taken home the silverware, but the Air Force Eagles still found a lot to like about their performance at the 2018 ADF Ice Hockey Association carnival at the Penrith Ice Palace in Sydney’s west from November 18-24.

The Eagles went down to Army, 6-1, in the grand final, having qualified for the decider after a 5-2 win over Navy and a 0-3 loss to Army in the round-robin games.

Army was quick to open the scoring in the first period of the grand final, skating out to a 3-0 lead.

Air Force goalkeeper LAC David Pennell was put to the test even further but managed to weather the storm heading into the second term.

The Eagles registered their goal courtesy of some persistent work in front of the net by FLTLT Rohan Jacobsen.

But this seemed to spark Army’s attack and it added another three goals.

Eagles player FLTLT Peter Cunningham said it was a good tournament for the Eagles, despite the grand final result.

“We were able to take satisfaction in fielding a fledgling team with a number of players relatively new to the sport,” FLTLT Cunningham said.

“LAC Pennell was the stand-out goalkeeper for the carnival across the three services and walked away with the MVP goalkeeper award.”

Those interested in taking part in a fast-paced, physical and competitive sport can contact the ADF Ice Hockey Association via ADF.IceHockey@defence.gov.au
HOT SHOTS

Starring at the ADF basketball titles

CPL Bill Solomou

NINE Air Force members were selected to represent the ADF after impressing at the ADF Basketball Association national championships. ACW Lauren Campbell and LACW Eqxelle Evans were selected in the women’s team, with Air Force CPL Dean Burke as head coach. LAC Robert Ball, CPL Adrian Duran, CPL Ash Condon and FLTLT Matthew Potaczek were selected in the men’s team, with FSgt Bill Lawrie as head coach and SqnLdr Janeter Turnbull as assistant coach.

This year marked the 35th anniversary of the titles, at RAAF Base Edinburgh from November 23 to December 2. ADF teams from NSW won both the men’s and women’s titles.

ADF/NSW men’s coach FSgt Lawrie said the team had a slow start to the competition, losing the first two games against Northern Territory and Queensland.

“As the week progressed the team united as a group, displaying strong defense,” FSgt Lawrie said.

“They followed the game plan, with defensive stops leading into a fast-break game with all players contributing at both ends of the court. “I was very lucky to have a cohesive group that worked as one on and off the court. They listened to feedback, made adjustments on the run and followed the game plan, especially on the defensive end of the court.”

The NSW men’s beat Victoria in the final, 79-58. FSgt Lawrie said the women’s competition was the closest he had seen in years.

“Teams won by very small margins and games were being decided in the last minute of the game,” he said.

“All five teams played hard, physical basketball. It was great to see the talent of players across the women’s teams and this will benefit the growth of women’s basketball in Defence.”

A combined NSW and Victorian team beat Queensland, 72-49, in the women’s final.

FLTLT Matthew Potaczek, who was later chosen in the ADF team, makes a fast-break for the ACT during the ADF national basketball titles at RAAF Base Edinburgh. Photo: CPL Bill Solomou

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Lockheed Martin congratulates the Royal Australian Air Force on the arrival of the first F-35s on Australian soil. We are proud to continue our 80-year history of partnership with Australia and welcome a new era for the sovereign defence of and national security for Australia. RAAF’s F-35 fleet now has the world’s most advanced, capable 5th Generation fighter – combining advanced stealth capabilities with fighter aircraft speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations, and advanced logistics and sustainment. Welcome to the future. Learn more at lockheedmartin.com/australia.

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A VM LEIGH Gordon felt a sense of pride as he watched A35-009 and A35-010 touch down at RAAF Base Williamtown. As Head Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), AVM Gordon credits the success of the Australian F-35A Project to the hard work and dedication of thousands of people involved in bringing the capability to Australia.

“I am lucky to be leading the project at this time,” AVM Gordon said. “It’s taken almost two decades of work to get us to where we are now and, in Australia, the hard work is just beginning.”

Talking at the symbolic first aircraft arrival event at Williamtown on December 10, AVM Gordon said the arrival demonstrated that Air Force, supported by the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, had the maturity to operate a fifth-generation fighter in Australia.

“Over the past 12 months we’ve seen the Australian fleet of F-35A aircraft build up at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona,” he said. “In addition to the two jets that have arrived at No. 3 Squadron, we have eight Australian jets operating in a pool of training aircraft at the International Pilot Training Centre at Luke. This will grow to 10 in 2019.

“Before they were ferried to Australia, we were able to operate A35-009 and A35-010 in the US as Australian sovereign operations – using our own Autonomic Logistics Information System under our own airworthiness system and governance framework.

“We could effectively start verifying and validating the whole air system. This aircraft arrival is a sign of the maturity of the Australian F-35A Project – now we’re ready to start operating the jets in Australia.”

The verification and validation program will test the F-35A capability in Australia leading up to the anticipated declaration of initial operating capability in December 2020.

“The F-35 is a complex endeavour,” AVM Gordon said.

“The verification and validation program is one of our key strategies to manage that complexity. It’s a program of events where we will seek confidence that we can conduct all the steps that deliver the F-35 capability in Australia.

“IT’S TAKEN ALMOST TWO DECADES OF WORK TO GET US TO WHERE WE ARE NOW AND, IN AUSTRALIA, THE HARD WORK IS JUST BEGINNING.”

“We need to do simple things like flying, loading weapons and training in small and large groups.

“By the end of the two-year program we need to be in a position where we have an operational squadron – No. 3 Squadron – that can conduct a range of roles as required by the government and Defence, as well as a training squadron – No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit – that is ready to start feeding the Australian F-35A capability with a trained Air Force workforce for the next 35 years.”

The JSF Division has more work ahead of it, too.

“We now have two jets in Australia – and that should be celebrated,” AVM Gordon said. “But there are 70 more to come before the CAF can declare F-35A final operating capability at the end of 2023.

“Members of the JSF Division will continue to focus on delivering the aircraft, transitioning functions to the Air Combat Systems Program Office and focusing on the follow-on modernisation phases of the project.”

He said members of JSF Division would also continue to support Air Force as it led the F-35A transformation in Defence.

“The F-35A represents a new way of warfighting and a new way of operating and doing business,” he said.

“We need to shift to a fifth-generation way of thinking so Defence as a whole can get the most out of the F-35A capability.”
WELCOME the arrival of the first of our F-35A aircraft to Williamtown as the next step in our journey towards fifth-generation airpower.

The Air Force is already capable. But it is now facing the greatest evolution of air power in its history.

For Australia, the F-35A project is much more than just delivering a new strike fighter. It’s not just about an aircraft. The Joint Strike Fighter program is driving us to work together to create and sustain a fifth-generation Air Force and the associated networked battlespace.

Such a change demands ingenuity, requiring a workforce that is empowered to think and act outside of the traditional norms.

Our next generation of airmen and airwomen must develop professional mastery that extends beyond traditional mission specialisations. We must promote critical thinking, strategic understanding, innovative problem solving, collaboration and leadership – the arrival of our Joint Strike Fighter means no more business as usual.

Real-time innovation, which enables us to exploit narrow windows of opportunity, to gain operational advantage, requires us to embrace a culture of always looking for ways to create an asymmetric advantage by better use of available technology.

In a complex battlespace, we will rely on both integration and distributed operations. We will need to understand how we produce a ‘leader’ who comprehends how to create the required joint effect of multiple ADF platforms and non-kinetic abilities.

I firmly believe there is significant opportunity wrapped up in our rapidly advancing technology; we must focus on exploiting it.

I have every confidence that each of you will evolve our fifth-generation Air Force, that you will bring to your specialisations the expertise and knowledge to maximise this opportunity as an integral part of the ADF’s joint effect.

We are now transforming into a truly fifth-generation force.
The arrival of the F-35A marks the end of the inaugural phase to bring our first fifth-generation fighter to its new home and the start of a journey to integrate and operate the F-35A with our current Air Force capabilities. It is a major milestone in the history of the Air Force to see the first of the F-35As arrive and make their new home at Williamtown. Over the next few years, Air Combat Group will see the F-35As arrive in strength for Nos. 3 and 77 Squadrons and No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit in Newcastle, before No. 75 Squadron at Tindal. This will make Australia a significant operator of this advanced aircraft and change the way we train, exercise and conduct operations. Our people have excelled in their training in the US and at home in both the flying and ground roles that are critical to getting the best out of these highly complex and technically leading edge aircraft. The aircraft on its own is exceptional, but what makes it a truly brilliant capability is the work that happens to ensure it plays a key role in our next-generation, networked-enabled Air Force. The networked battlespace will draw on all of our capabilities and technologies, including those of Army and Navy, and will compel us to innovate. This is a truly exciting time to be a part of the Air Force and it will be the capability of our people across all Force Element Groups, roles and trades that brings out the best in this platform and in the RAAF as a fighting force.
MY PRIORITIES ARE TO BUILD UP OUR SQUADRON TO THE POINT WHERE IT CAN BE DEPLOYED AS A FIGHTING UNIT.

A S THE Commanding Officer of No. 3 Squadron WGCDDR Darren Clare flew the last leg of A35-009’s journey to its permanent base at RAAF Base Williamtown, he knew a large crowd would be watching – and waiting.

“Bringing our first aircraft home to Australia has been years in the making and is what everyone has been working towards up to this point, but it is also just the start,” WGCDDR Clare said.

“It’s a huge achievement for everyone who has worked on the AIR6000 Project. I may be the person flying the aircraft to this great reception, but there have been thousands of people over many years who have contributed to making this happen.

“Landing in Williamtown was a wonderful privilege and a significant milestone in preparing this capability for operations in the future.”

WGCDDR Clare said he hoped people would get excited about Air Force’s fifth-generation aircraft now the first F-35A aircraft were on home soil.

“Our next chapter starts now,” he said.

“With the jets in Australia, my priorities as CO are to build up our squadron to the point where it can be deployed as a fighting unit and for 3SQN to lead Air Force’s transition to a fifth-generation force.”

Air Force is expected to declare F-35A initial operating capability (IOC) by the end of 2020, with about 30 jets flying in Australia at that point.

In the lead-up to IOC, 3SQN personnel will work closely with other organisations in the JSF enterprise (including the JSF Division, Air Combat Systems Program Office, Air Combat Transition Office, No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit and industry partners) during the Australian verification and validation (V&V) program.

The aim of V&V is to assess both the F-35A and all of the support systems in Australia’s unique operating environment, ensuring the entire ‘system’ meets Australian requirements. V&V will also continue the development of tactics and procedures to maximise Australia’s combat air power outputs.

“We need to exercise the whole system,” WGCDDR Clare said.

“By that I mean making sure the sustainment and support processes work and that we have what we need in the right place at the right time.

“We also need to ensure our security processes work; we have the right workforce structure; our training systems are producing quality pilots and maintenance personnel; and that the Autonomic Logistics Information System (ALIS) and reprogramming capability are operating as required.

“By getting these systems and processes correct now, we will set up the F-35A capability for long-term success.”

3SQN personnel will participate in training activities over the next two years. These include various weapons shoots in the US and Australia, as well as domestic deployments.

WGCDDR Clare said he was confident the people in 3SQN, which now includes six pilots and 40 maintainers, were up to the task of introducing this transformational capability.

“The F-35A requires a new way of thinking,” he said.

“As I said to my team back at Luke Air Force Base: absolutely everyone working on the F-35A is critical to operational success. “ALIS binds everything together so tightly that even the database managers are crucial to the outcomes of the mission.”

Next chapter STARTS NOW

Bringing the first aircraft home is both an end and a beginning, CO 3SQN WGCDDR Darren Clare tells Alisha Welch
WHAT DOES THE ARRIVAL OF THE F-35A AIRCRAFT MEAN TO YOU?

FLTLT Bec Sweeney
Position: Facilities Liaison Officer, Air Combat Transition Office
Time in project: One year
I’m pretty excited to see the jets finally get here because it means all of the hard work the team has put in for the past 12 months has paid off.

LAC Peter Trevett
Position: Aircraft Technician, No. 3 Squadron
Time in project: Three months
Having our own aircraft here is exciting. I’m really looking forward to bringing the Air Force into the fifth-generation and being part of the team that’s leading the way.

CPL Doug Leckie
Position: Facilities Liaison Officer, Air Combat Transition Office
Time in project: One year
For the rest of my career I can look back and say I was involved in the early stages of setting up the F-35A facilities, which is pretty exciting.

SGT Rob Mitchell
Position: SNCO Aircraft Maintenance, No. 3 Squadron
Time in project: Two years
Considering how long we’ve been working on the project, having the ability to demonstrate the aircraft to the Australian public is really rewarding.

SGT Jarrad Seaton
Position: SNCO Armament, No. 3 Squadron
Time in project: Two years
I was a part of the Classic Hornet system for 10 years and now I’m working on something brand new so it feels like the start of a new chapter in my career.

LAC Peter Trevett
Position: Aircraft Technician, No. 3 Squadron
Time in project: Three months
Considering how long we’ve been working on the project, having the ability to demonstrate the aircraft to the Australian public is really rewarding.

SGT Rob Mitchell
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Time in project: Two years
It’s really good to actually have our own aircraft here and operational in Australian airspace.

SGT Dion Johnston
Position: Workforce Transition Coordinator, Air Combat Transition Office
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LACW Ashlee Hooper
Position: Travel Clerk, No. 3 Squadron
Time in project: Three months
It’s very exciting to finally be able to put all of our preparation to work with actual aircraft.

Two Australian F-35As take to the air in Arizona as they prepare for the flight home.
Photo: CPL Dan Pinhorn
As the F-35As prepare for their next chapter, on home soil, the people who work with them look back with pride and forwards with excitement.

Interviews and photos: CPL Sebastian Beurich

**LACW Ashlee Hooper**
Position: Travel Clerk, No. 3 Squadron
Time in project: Three months

It’s very exciting to finally be able to put all of our preparation to work with actual aircraft.

**SGT Jonathon Knowles**
Position: SMOD Life Support, No. 3 Squadron
Time in project: Nine months

Seeing the jets fly in is a proud moment that represents hard work and dedication. It’s great to be involved in such an exciting chapter in Air Force history.

**CPL Antoine Jean-Pierre**
Position: Autonomic Logistics Information System Administrator, Off-Board Information Support Centre
Time in project: One year

It’s really exciting. After all the preparation and training, we will finally receive our first aircraft and work on a real-life operational system. Challenging but rewarding times ahead.

**SGT Simon Avis**
Position: Instructor, F-35A Integrated Training Centre
Time in project: Two years

It’s exciting to finally get up close, interact with the jets a bit more and give our students the opportunity to get hands on with an actual aircraft.

**CPL Brendon Strawhorn**
Position: NCO Avionics, No. 3 Squadron
Time in project: Two years

Having our own aircraft here is great. After a few training stints over in the US, it’s good to finally have them on Australian soil and to get down to business.

**LACW Amanda Norris**
Position: Officer in Charge, F-35A Integrated Training Centre
Time in project: One year

The arrival of our aircraft culminates what my team at the ITC have been working towards this year. We commenced F-35A training mid-2018 and now that the jets have arrived, we can put all of our training into practice.
Levett Engineering is an Australian manufacturer of precision machined components and mechanical subassemblies for the F-35 and its F135 engine

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**Mates celebrate an ENDURING BOND**

A common aircraft and skills bring two allies even closer,

WGCDR September Clare and Alisha Welch report

**BEGINNING OF STORY**

The long-standing alliance between Australia and the US was on show on November 9 as staff from the Australian Embassy in Washington DC joined RAAF personnel at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona to thank their US partners for their support with establishing the Australian F-35A capability.

Representatives from the US Air Force, Fighter Country Partnership and Lockheed Martin attended the mateship event, which Australian Air Attaché AIRCDRE Terry Van Haren said was an opportunity to acknowledge the support from the US.

“Forged on the front lines in France 100 years ago, the relationship between Australia and the US grows ever stronger,” he said.

“Australian and American soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and women have served alongside one another in every major conflict since WWI. This is symbolic of the deep and enduring bond, mutual respect and close cooperation that exists between Australia and the US.”

Although RAAF personnel have worked with US forces on exercises and operations for decades, the introduction of the F-35A to Australia means the two air forces now share a common aircraft, binding their air combat capabilities further.

CO No. 3 Squadron WGCDR Darren Clare said Australians had been made to feel welcome at Luke Air Force Base “since the first Aussie set foot here more than four years ago”.

“Lockheed Martin immediately had large numbers of Australian personnel embedded in the 61st Aircraft Maintenance Unit (AMU) for training. Among the support we have enjoyed, we have been able to build a close relationship with the US airmen. They have always been professional and friendly, and have treated the Australian pilots like any other US Air Force instructors.”

“We hold positions of leadership in the squadron and I have represented the 61FS Commander at times. All the other pilots at the 61 Fighter Squadron have full faith in the Australian instructors. It is an honour to be trusted to teach another nation’s fighter pilots how to fly the F-35A,” he said.

Commander Air Combat Group AIRCDRE Mike Kitcher also thanked the Luke hosts for their support of the RAAF F-35A instructors, which has been hard at work over the past 18 months preparing to return to Australia with the first two aircraft.

“It has been a great privilege to serve Australia in the RAAF and I would like to thank the Air Force and all of our Allies who have supported us,” Kitcher said.

Pilot currency training is planned to begin at RAAF Base Williamtown in early 2019 and operational conversions are scheduled from 2020.

**CONCLUSION**

Enduring bond: A mateship event at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona

**END**
When No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit transitions from Hornets to the F-35A aircraft this time next year, WGCDR Jordon Sander will take over as Commanding Officer. F-35A training at 2OCU will include pilot training, maintenance training and a large contracted workforce. Currently in the US learning to fly the F-35A, WGCDR Sander talked to WGCDR September Clare about the future.

**Tell us a bit about yourself.**

I STARTED my first instructional job on Classic Hornets at 2OCU after graduating from the Fighter Combat Instructor course in 2006. In total, I have instructed six Hornet conversions and three Fighter Combat Instructor courses. After my conversion to the F-35A, I will stay in the US for another year to instruct new United States Air Force (USAF) trainees and other RAAF Hornet pilots undergoing conversion. There will be approximately 10 RAAF instructors embedded in the USAF 61st Fighter Squadron. At the end of next year, I will become the CO of 2OCU.

**Drawing on your experience as a fighter pilot instructor, how different do you envisage training will be on Australia’s first fifth-generation combat aircraft?**

THE complexity of the aircraft systems is always increasing. This results in asking more from our trainee pilots than we have done previously but they are up to the challenge because I have seen how they keep delivering. Although combat aircraft, in particular the F-35A, are getting easier to fly ‘non-tactically’, the increased complexity in mission systems will result in increased simulator use. 2OCU will operate six full mission simulators at Williamtown. Despite the quality of simulation improving, it will not be able to replicate all aspects of flying. Getting the right mix of simulator time and flying is going to be vital, therefore I think we will see increased simulator use. With the quantity and quality of simulation increasing, I expect trainee pilots will be better prepared when they get to the aircraft. This is especially important now they don’t have someone in their back seat to identify their errors and correct them.

**You said the complexity of aircraft systems has been increasing. What impact will this have on developing the right tactical procedures and in turn pilot training for the F-38A?**

I WATCHED the Hornet evolve from being a platform that dropped ‘dumb bombs’ and simple ‘laser-guided bombs’ to a datalink-enabled global positioning system/internal navigation system (GPS/INS) munitions platform. One of the biggest things slowing us down in maximising these new capabilities has always been ourselves. I believe that tradition can sometimes be a ball and chain around our ankle if we don’t understand why we do what we do – and it takes about two posting cycles (4-6 years) for the operators to fully maximise new capability. Two particular examples come to mind. The first was told to me by then WGCDR Phil Gordon who said that when we got the Hornet we continued to manual bomb (WWII-style bombing) for years because that’s what we did in the Mirage. Some old and solids were still of the belief that good manual bombers made good automatic (computer assisted) bombers. While that is true, we needed to let go of manual bombing in order to free up space in the curriculum to maximise the new capability.

The second example is when we introduced Link 16 (tactical datalink), which was a technological leap forward in capability similar to the jet engine and radar. Link 16 allows the pilot to see where other friendly are, including a shared picture of what everyone’s sensors are seeing. But when we first got Link 16 I saw the same argument made again by the traditionalists; if you can fly good tactics without datalink, then you can do it with datalink. Therefore, we spent large amounts of time flying non-datalink tactics while not exploring new tactics to take advantage of Link 16. In fact, it took probably more than six years to realise this.

**What changes have had to be made to make way for new technologies?**

WHILE it is not 2OCU’s place to set and change fighter tactics, we do have to make tough choices about what we can and can’t teach in a six-month course that often uses 100 per cent of the trainees’ time. As an example in Hornet, dumb bombing skills were cut to make room for GPS/INS weapon employment. Of course any changes have the endorsement of the customer (our operational squadrons). In F-35A we will be building our pilot operational conversion (OPCON) from the ground up, based on what we have seen in the US. We won’t be able to teach the trainee everything and I see 2OCU having lengthy discussions with the operational squadrons to ensure we find the right balance.

**Do you think we are asking too much of our trainee pilots?**

IN MY time, I have been nothing but impressed with the trainees’ ability to take in more and do more. Whether it be understanding our datalinks down to the bit level or understanding the complex GPS/INS weapon employment. We talk about the ‘Xbox generation’ being able to cope and I think the Xbox generation will exceed our expectations on F-35A. That said, it is important to acknowledge the entire pilot training system from basic flying training through to lead-in fighter training. We could not graduate the quality of fighter pilot we do without them.

**How does flying a fifth-generation aircraft compare to flying a fourth-generation aircraft?**

WHEN I took non-pilots into the Hornet simulator they were surprised by how easy the aircraft was to fly. I would jokingly tell them it’s our secret; letting everyone think it’s difficult and you need superhuman skill to fly it.

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Then I would explain that fighter flying is like ice hockey. The professional ice hockey player is not thinking about skating in his/her conscious, they are thinking about the game. Fighter flying is the same. We want the pilot thinking about tactics, not about flying. Therefore the aircraft are designed to be easy to fly.

F-35A has taken this to a new level with a superior autopilot, automation and fusion of sensors. A fourth-generation pilot spends most of their time driving and interpreting their individual sensors, while a fifth-generation pilot just interprets what the mission computer puts in front of them on the screen.

So what does this evolution in technology mean for fifth-generation fighter pilot training? At 2OCU, the technology allows us to teach people to fly the F-35A without actually being in the aircraft. It also means that our instructors need to develop slightly different skills because they will be instructing from afar in a separate F-35A and not from the back seat.

What skills will our instructor pilots need?

THE F-35A is not the first single-seat-only platform but it is something the RAAF has not done in a long time.

One new skill for the F-35A instructor pilot is flying the role of chase plane. In certain training missions we have a chase plane to closely supervise the trainee. A challenge of instructing from the other aircraft is not seeing what the trainee is doing.

In a two-seat mission, the instructor pilot can quickly see a bad habit and address it with the trainee, ensuring the trainee is doing the correct thing by the end of the mission. For single seat this is a lot harder.

The simulator plays a big part here and in a perfect world the jet is just like the simulator; therefore the trainee has seen it all before. The reality is the simulator is not always identical and this is where a good instructor pilot really hits home by identifying these differences in the pre-flight briefing. We have got some valuable experience at the USAF’s 61st Fighter Squadron that will set us up well for starting our Australian-based F-35A training in 2021.

Why is our pilot training system the way it is?

I DEFINE our pilot training system as training conducted from beginning (CT-4 and now PC-21) through to the lead-in fighter (Hawk 127) and onto the final operational aircraft type. From the beginning of aviation through to Vietnam, aircraft were difficult to fly with many people sadly losing their lives in the take-off and landing phases. So I think the three-tiered approach (basic trainer to lead-in fighter to operational platform) to pilot training was built around how challenging the jet aircraft of the ‘50s to ‘80s were to fly. Modern aircraft are very different and therefore a fifth-generation air force should review how it trains its pilots.

The Swiss go straight from PC-21 to Classic Hornet for example.

What is a fifth-generation fighter pilot?

I DON’T see the foundational attributes of a fighter pilot changing dramatically.

Our fighter pilots’ attributes are:

• Integrity. We progress as a community because of our ability to admit our mistakes, so that others may learn. Integrity is vital in a single-seat aircraft.

• Natural flyer. The tactical complexity requires that flying takes little brain space.

• Ability to correctly prioritise tasks in an overloaded environment. Our fighter pilots will still have more tasks in the cockpit than what is possible. Despite their workload they must always correctly prioritise the safe operation of their jet over anything else.

What do we need out of No. 76 Squadron?

THE end-state is a trainee pilot that has the required skills to pass F-35A OPCON to deliver the competencies of an F-35A wingman as defined by 81WG. In doing this we must work with 76SQN to ensure the intro fighter course adequately prepares them for F-35A OPCON. When I was XO 81WG I was very impressed with 76SQN’s ability to predict how trainees would perform on Hornet OPCON.

What do you consider are going to be the keys to success for your command as the first F-35A CO for 2OCU?

• TAKE the good from Hornet OPCON and leave behind the things that are not relevant.

• Good communications with operational squadrons and 76SQN/78WG.

• A healthy relationship with the increased contractor workforce.

Underlining all of this will be our engineers and technicians ensuring we have aircraft to fly, our logistics folks ensuring we have the spares, our new IT and security workforce ensuring our off-board systems are working and we are protecting our secrets, our contractors supporting us in running the facility and training our people, our personnel capability staff looking after our people and the loving support of the families behind our people.

As CO 2OCU I want everyone under the 2OCU roof to take pride in graduating the world’s best F-35A pilots and maintainers. This should be their focus, our mission.
The arrival of the first F-35A aircraft was the culmination of 20 years of planning, Alisha Welch writes.

A new technological era dawned with the arrival of the first F-35A aircraft. As No. 3 Squadron begins verifying and validating the F-35 capability in the Australian operating environment, Head Joint Strike Fighter AVM Leigh Gordon reflected on two decades of dedication and innovation that have positioned Air Force as one of the most advanced in the world.

“Twenty years ago, Project AIR6000 was established to consider the ‘whole of capability’ options to replace the ageing A-37A/B Hornet and F-111 fleets,” AVM Gordon said.

“In June 2002, Australia joined the System Development and Demonstration phase of the global F-35 Program to gain insight into the aircraft’s development and capabilities.”

First Pass approval of Project AIR6000 and approval to enter the Production, Sustainment and Follow-on Development (PSFD) phase of the F-35 Program occurred in 2006.

“Joining in the PSFD phase provided Australia with visibility of, and some influence over, development of the F-35 Program – but with no commitment to buy aircraft,” AVM Gordon said.

“This was important because Australia had not finalised its decision to acquire the F-35.” After rigorous assessment, the F-35A was determined to be the most advanced, affordable fifth-generation multi-role stealth fighter to meet Australia’s needs.

Second Pass approval in November 2009 authorised Defence to manage a staged approach to acquisition, with Stage 1 to procure an initial 14 aircraft and enabling elements to commence training.

In April 2014, the government approved Project AIR6000 Phase 2A/B Stage 2, authorising Defence to purchase an additional 58 aircraft, facilities and support systems required to deliver initial operating capability (IOC) in 2020 and final operating capability (FOC) in 2023.

“This brought the total order for Australian F-35A aircraft to 72,” AVM Gordon said.

A few months later, Defence celebrated as the first two Australian F-35A aircraft rolled off Lockheed Martin’s production line in Fort Worth, Texas. These aircraft were later ferried to the international Pilot Training Centre at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona to be used in a pool of international training aircraft.

“We envisaged an impressive piece of machinery – and it undoubtedly is. But what makes the F-35A’s capability so transformational is its background systems and infrastructure that support it.” Essential infrastructure work began at RAAF Base Williamtown in May 2015, representing almost $1 billion of the facilities investment in F-35A operations as it provides the essential (hardware, software and data) that performs maintenance management, fault diagnostics, supply support, mission planning and training management across the F-35A weapon system.

“A35-009 and A35-010 were ferried to RAAF Base Williamtown using Australian ALIS and maintenance personnel with contracted support.”

“This is a significant achievement as it is the model to be used for the majority of future Australian F-35A operations and one that gives me great confidence.”

Throughout 2018, Australia’s eight Low Rate Initial Production Lot 10 aircraft were accepted by Air Force and began flying operations at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona.

“These aircraft have Block 3F mission system software installed, which delivers the next increment of war-fighting capability and is the requirement for the Australian IOC declaration,” AVM Gordon said.

“This was a significant milestone for the Australian F-35A Project, demonstrating the maturity of the US-led global F-35 Program.”

While the arrival of our first F-35A aircraft at Williamtown marks the official beginning of their operations in Australia, the Project AIR6000 journey does not end as aircraft touch down on Australian flightlines.

AVM Gordon said Air Force would now verify and validate the Australian F-35A air system, while the “JSF Division would continue to deliver capability until all 72 aircraft are operating in Australia and FOC is declared at the end of 2023.”

The Australian F-35A Project has seen its fair share of challenges,” he said, “but that is to be expected in such a complex acquisition program. I am proud of the people who have worked hard over the past 20 years to deliver this capability for Australia.”