Operation Bushfire Assist

Special edition
Reports - Pages 2-11

Volunteer firefighters from Victoria’s Country Fire Authority board an Air Force C-17A Globemaster at RAAF Base Richmond.
Photo: CPL Casey Forster
Thank you for jobs so well done

TO ALL commanders, soldiers, sailors, airmen and women: as the National Emergency Coordinator for ADF’s response to the bushfire crisis, I want to thank Regular and Reserve members who have supported this vitally important endeavour.

At the start of my tenure I asked you all to lean forward in support of our emergency management services and the community.

I asked you to act, without being prompted.

I asked you to make a difference.

To every man and woman, you answered that call.

I have had recounted to me and have personally witnessed actions that are too many in number to relay here.

Actions that are extreme in their diversity of scale, some massive, such as the evacuation of Mallacoota in Victoria, the recovery of downed aircraft in NSW and the provision of drinkable water on Kangaroo Island in South Australia, all the way to the smallest acts of kindness, such as helping people gain access to their properties or nursing injured koalas.

Regardless of their scale, all actions have been exceptionally meaningful to our community.

I have received nothing but praise from our Emergency Management Services, who have done such amazing work, and of course, our communities.

While I say thank you and good luck to those who have left or are leaving, it is important to note the job is far from over. There is still work to be done.

This work is arduous, relentless.

We will continue to work with state and national emergency and recovery agencies to finish what we started.

While we will continue to respond to local emergencies as they arise, it is the national and state recovery agencies that will lead the long-term recovery we now principally support.

We will have regular forces and volunteer reservists continuing this important work, although we will continue to respond and provide relief as emergencies arise.

This bushfire season is far from over.

Our job is not done until the relevant state and national authorities declare it so.

Until that day, every day counts in making a difference to our community.

I thank you again for your service and I personally look forward to continuing our important work supporting Operation Bushfire Assist.

There is no greater honour than serving our nation.

Let’s continue to make our fellow Australians proud.

MAJGEN Justin Ellwood.

Loss of Coulson C-130Q Hercules

The RAAF extends its deepest sympathies to the family, friends and colleagues of the crew from the Coulson C-130Q Hercules lost on January 23.

We recognise and honour the service and sacrifice of the crew and all those contributing to fighting bushfires here in Australia.

FLTLT Jessica Aldred

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IR Force people and aircraft have been on mission since September supporting NSW, VIC and SA Governments and conducting many tasks, from evacuating Australians in fire-impacted communities to providing critical supplies and transporting firefighters.

The ADF and Air Force response was bolstered over the Christmas period with more than 800 RAAF personnel contributing to the almost-5000 strong ADF response supporting federal and state authorities.

ACAUST AVM Joe Iervasi said the Air Force contribution was significant, both in the air and on the ground.

“ Australian firefighters have been working tirelessly in difficult circumstances, and Air Force has continued to support them in their efforts,” AVM Iervasi said. “ We had more than 800 personnel from around 71 units and every FEg come together to support the state authorities, to help fire-affected Australian communities.”

“Air Force has been supporting requests for bushfire support since September last year, and our aircraft played an important role in transporting evacuees, delivering fuel, food and water, and moving emergency services personnel to where they were needed,” AVM Iervasi said.

“Many Air Force bases demonstrated their importance and function as capability elements in their own right as they delivered emergency accommodation for evacuees and took on critical tasks, such as refuelling firefighting aircraft and working as a staging point for Defence helicopters. Our people demonstrated their professionalism to the Australian people, as well as the state firefighting organisations - from airlift support to aerial reconnaissance, logistics support and engineering field work,” AVM Iervasi said.

“I am proud of our Air Force people stepping up, particularly at posting and moving time, and coming together to support the state authorities responding to the bushfire crisis,” Operation Bushfire Assist is the Australian Defence Force’s response in support of the ongoing bushfire crisis across NSW, VIC and SA.

FLTLT Jessica Aldred
Praise for dedication, selfless acts

Since September 2019, Air Force aircraft and people have provided support to state authorities and firefighters battling the bushfire crisis in NSW, Victoria and SA. From RAAF aircraft evacuating Australians from fire zones and providing critical aerial surveillance of fire fronts through to airfield engineers creating firebreaks, Air Force personnel mobilised to support the Australian community.

FLT LT Jessica Aldred

Reflecting on the contribution Air Force is making to Operation Bushfire Assist, CAF AIRMSHL Mel Hupfeld said he was proud of the tireless and incredible work being undertaken by Air Force members under difficult circumstances.

“Many Air Force members were recalled early from leave to enable the ADF to surge to support civil emergency management and firefighting authorities,” AIRMSHL Hupfeld said.

“I am pleased that our Air Force members have distinguished themselves in challenging conditions both in the air and on the ground, showing great skill and dedication in delivering all that has been asked of them.”

Since New Year’s Eve, when fire conditions became catastrophic, a range of Air Force aircraft have been providing air support across several states, with up to three C-27J Spartans, up to two C-130J Hercules, one C-17A Globemaster, one P-8A Poseidon, and up to three B350 King Air aircraft deployed to assist. They have been joined by Army and Navy rotary wing aircraft, as well as fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft from the Royal New Zealand Air Force, Koku-Jieitai (Japan Air Self Defense Force), and Republic of Singapore Air Force.

“Air Force has been working closely with civilian authorities throughout this crisis, with our aircraft and personnel consistently proving their flexibility and delivering the right capability for the task at hand,” AIRMSHL Hupfeld said.

“Our bases, particularly East Sale, Richmond and Edinburgh, continue to play critical roles in supporting the firefighting efforts – from providing accommodation and meals for firefighters and evacuees to refuelling and logistics – becoming essential airheads to reach the fire zones.

“Our people have also consistently demonstrated their professionalism and skill, conducting evacuate airlift, aerial surveillance, logistics, air movements, providing health support, clearing roads and making firebreaks, and maintaining a high level of aircraft serviceability in especially difficult conditions.”

AIRMSHL Hupfeld reiterated that the bushfire crisis, and Air Force’s role in responding to it, is ongoing, with a number of weeks remaining in the 2020 bushfire season.

“Air Force is a small part of the total bushfire response effort, and our work – alongside that of the rest of the ADF and Defence – will continue to complement the significant work of the state authorities and the personnel working for those agencies for or the remainder of the 2020 bushfire season.

The bushfire crisis is the Australian Defence Force’s main effort under Operation Bushfire Assist, with several thousand full-time and reserve personnel providing direct support in the field, at sea, in the air and from Defence bases across fire-affected regions.

As of January 22.
Keen eyes on safety as traffic increases

FLTG Brent Moloney

FLTLT Ben Young’s team deployed to the Transportable Air Operations Tower at Bairnsdale Airport in early January at short notice after the ADF was called to support Victorian State Emergency Services to fight bushfires and provide community aid.

FLTLT Young works with a small team of air traffic controllers from No. 44 Wing, to provide an airfield flight information service for civilian and military aircraft.

“We’re making sure their situational awareness coming in and out of the aerodrome is safe and efficient, because it has been getting quite busy now with the increased effort,” FLTLT Young said.

Significant fluctuations in weather had an adverse effect on flying conditions across much of the affected area during the past week, making the Transportable Air Operations Tower a critical component for the continued emergency efforts in Gippsland.

The service that FLTLT Young and his colleagues provided from Bairnsdale Airport improved the situation for pilots operating in the area and allowed for sustained flying operations during challenging conditions.

“We’ve already had pilots say to us that what we’re providing is a fantastic service and it’s really helped the way they’ve been able to operate in and out of Bairnsdale,” FLTLT Young said.

“It’s a great feeling to come and actually do what we train for. The day-to-day air traffic services is our job but the reason why we wear the uniform is to get out here and help when Defence is called upon.”

ANSWERING THE CALL: OUR PEOPLE

FLGOFF Claire Burnet

RAAF C-27J Spartan loadmaster CPL Antonia Guterres has been hands-on in helping deliver supplies to fire-affected communities in isolated regions of Victoria. From No. 35 Squadron at RAAF Amberley, CPL Guterres is part of a team that worked RAAF East Sale supporting the local emergency services.

“Getting the first group of evacuees out of Mallacoota was an experience I’ll never forget,” CPL Guterres said.

“They were all so grateful and the children were great; I gave them some lollies to help lift their spirits during a turbulent time. My role as a Spartan loadmaster is quite varied; anything from checking the aircraft over pre-flight, loading and correctly weightiing cargo, undertaking in-flight supply drops and even helping with search and rescue operations.”

During Operation Bushfire Assist, Spartan crews have been responsible for moving hundreds of evacuees and firefighters as well as police officers, medics, veterinarians, emergency service contractors not to mention cats and dogs, and koalas.

“I grew up in Springwood in Brisbane and worked in recruitment before joining the ADF in 2018 as a loadmaster, so this has been an incredible and memorable experience early in my Defence career,” CPL Guterres said.

“My team also flew 30 AUSNET line workers from Albany to a small Corryong airfield so they could begin restoring power to the town. At Merimbula, we brought home the same group of fires that we dropped there early in the operation, we were all happy to see each other again. The camaraderie between everyone involved in this bushfire emergency is pretty special.”

RAAF C-27J Spartan loadmaster CPL Antonia Guterres has praised the camaraderie between everyone involved in the bushfire emergency. Photo: CPL Kylie Gibson

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Sharing the load to deliver crucial supplies

FLGOFF Claire Burnet

RAAF C-27J Spartan loadmaster CPL Antonia Guterres has praised the camaraderie between everyone involved in the bushfire emergency. Photo: CPL Kylie Gibson
Proud to take the pilot’s seat

FLGOFF Claire Burnet

FLTLT Andrew Willersdorf was on his Christmas break with family in Queensland when the bushfire emergency began to unfold.

The C-27J Spartan pilot from the Sunshine Coast was watching the scale of the bushfires on television when he decided to contact his boss to see if he could help. “Our job as members of the ADF is to be ready when the government needs us, and we spend a lot of time training and conducting missions for situations like this,” FLTLT Willersdorf said.

Monarch's 200 Air Force personnel from about 71 RAAF units and a number of aircraft are working in support of Operation Bushfire Assist, including up to three C-27J Spartan, up to two C-130J Hercules, one C-17A Globemaster, one P-8A Poseidon, and up to three E-7A 300 King Air aircraft. This operation is FLTLT Willersdorf’s second in Australia, the first being Operation QLD Flood Assist in 2019. “I arrived at RAAF Base East Sale from Amberley a week ago and have been busy flying frisies, police, and Parks and Wildlife Victoria members into the bushfire-affected communities of Mallacoota and Merimbula,” FLTLT Willersdorf said.

FLTLT Willersdorf’s aircraft is a C-27J Spartan – small, nimble and capable of using short runways made of dirt. “The Spartan is particularly suitable for sustained operations like this because it is light on the ground and won’t damage airfields during constant take-off and landing rotations,” he said.

FLTLT Willersdorf said Air Force aircraft are conducting a range of tasks, including providing critical supplies of water, fuel, food, medical and veterinary supplies, as well as transporting firefighting and essential services personnel into and out of fire zones, evacuating members of fire-impacted communities, and surveillance and reconnaissance.

Spartans have been particularly busy throughout Victoria with over 119 flights moving 139,001 pounds of cargo, 1014 passengers, 26 dogs, five cats and 13 koalas. “In South Australia, my aircraft flew Country Fire Service volunteers from Port Augusta and Mount Gambier to Kangaroo Island then took the current team of volunteers back for some time off,” FLTLT Willersdorf said.

FLTLT Willersdorf said this operation was rewarding for ADF personnel because they were directly helping Australians and making a real difference in people’s lives. “It’s been eye-opening to see the amount of devastation these bushfires are causing and humbling to witness the selflessness of volunteers and community spirit,” he said.

Being a pilot in the Air Force is always diverse and rewarding, but giving back to our own Australian communities makes me very proud to be part of the ADF.”

Privilege to be part of the effort at home

FLGOFF Evita Ryan

AS AN aircraft loader CPL Corey O’Shannessy is used to doing his job all over the world. Even though he has completed three deployments to the Middle East, his deployment to RAAF Base Amberley was one he has been particularly proud to undertake.

Leading a small mobile team from No. 13 Squadron in Darwin, CPL O’Shannessy and his team supported No. 23 Squadron’s air movement tasking.

Air movements from the base at Amberley significantly increased in response to the operation as Air Force moved heavy equipment and personnel to New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, including Kangaroo Island and other regions devastated by the bushfires.

“I think I speak for the rest of my team in that we’re all proud to come down from Darwin to help out with Operation Bushfire Assist,” CPL O’Shannessy said.

“The team here in Amberley has been doing a great job. We’ve been running two shifts a day, roughly eight to nine hour shifts.”

“I’m really proud of the efforts that everyone has put in so far. My heart goes out to everyone who has been affected by the bushfires. Hopefully we can help get them back on their feet soon.”

Growing up in Old Bar, near Taree on the mid-north coast of NSW, CPL O’Shannessy worked as a baker in Taree before hanging up his apron and joining the Air Force in 2009.

“I decided to take a different avenue and the idea of loading aircraft, travelling around the world and no two days being the same appealed to me,” he said. In support of Operation Bushfire Assist, a mobile air load team from New Zealand integrated with CPL O’Shannessy’s team.

“I enjoy working with colleagues from different walks of life. “I’ve worked with New Zealand air load crew in the Middle East and they’re always been great. I appreciate them coming here to support us. I’d gladly do the same to support them.”

Putting in the hours

FLGOFF Clarice Hurren

WORKING tirelessly in the Red Cross North Melbourne Disaster Response Centre during the bushfires is SGT Andrew Boyle, a member of the RAAF Band for over 26 years. Red Cross volunteers are operating in a number of recovery centres, visiting homes, attending community activities and providing both practical and emotional support and information.

A Reservist since July 2018, clarinetist SGT Boyle undertook training with the Red Cross in late-2019 in preparation for the summer fire season. He was then called up after New Year’s Day to support the unfolding bushfire situation in Victoria.

“The Disaster Response Centre is providing much needed resources to evacuation centres across the state and referrals to emergency and recovery services,” SGT Boyle said. “It’s all about connecting people, and likely that I will continue to be involved for weeks.”

The recovery process is extensive, and the Red Cross will be providing ongoing support for those impacted by the bushfires.

“The care provided by the Red Cross is incredible, many volunteers are working long hours,” SGT Boyle said.

“My work here has enabled me to build on Defence skills and apply them in a different context.”

“In tough situations like this, you have to work under pressure, well in a team and be an efficient, reliable and responsible person.”
FLTLT Jessica Aldred

AUSTRALIA’S aerial firefighting retardant supplies were boosted during Operation Bushfire Assist thanks to the strong relationship between the United States Air Force and RAAF.

An Air Force C-17A Globemaster III collected the first 20-tonne load of critical fire retardant powder from Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, and delivered it to RAAF Base Richmond on January 18 to support state and federal emergency authorities.

A second load of retardant arrived on January 19 on a RAAF KC-30A multi-role tanker transport. A total of 117 tonnes were to be delivered as part of Operation Bushfire Assist.

CAF AIRMSHL Mel Hupfeld thanked the USAF and US stakeholders.

“The Royal Australian Air Force deeply appreciates the assistance being provided by the United States Air Force,” AIRMSHL Hupfeld said.

“This is yet another example of the strength of friendship between our two countries.”

The fire retardant supply is used by civilian Large Air Tanker and Very Large Air Tanker (VLAT) aircraft during bushfire fighting missions in Australia.

The delivery has been timely, with the arrival of a DC-10 VLAT and a C-17A with essential VLAT spare parts into Canberra on January 17 to mark the first of four new aerial firefighting aircraft announced by the Federal Government recently.

No. 1 Joint Movement Unit coordinated the many supporting organisations required to manage the complex re-supply, working with the USAF, Emergency Management Australia, Australian Border Force, the Department of Agriculture and RAAF air movement teams on the ground.

CO 1JMU, CAPT Fiona McNaught, RAN, said she was proud of her team’s professionalism “There was extensive international engagement and inter-agency coordination involved in the movement and delivery of the DC-10 spares and the fire retardant from the US to Australia,” CAPT McNaught said.

“The professionalism and efficiency of all organisations and individuals involved was nothing short of superb.”

Members of the 99th Logistics Readiness Squadron and the RAAF push a pallet of fire suppressant up the ramp of an Australian C-17A Globemaster III at Nellis Air Force Base.

Photo: Senior Airman Jeremy Wentworth
Skills on show for transport, assembly

Eamon Hamilton

DEPLOYING NH90 helicopters overseas is well-rehearsed for the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF).

On January 5, New Zealand Defence Minister Ron Mark announced the deployment of three NH90s from RNZAF Base Ohakea’s No. 3 Squadron.

The following day, a Royal Australian Air Force C-17 Globemaster arrived to collect the first NH90 for the 2300km trip across the Tasman Sea.

Efficiency from the No. 3 Squadron maintenance team is critical to ensuring the NH90s can be quickly deployed, ‘reassembled’ at its destination, and flown on disaster relief missions.

Fortunately, No. 3 Squadron was used to deploying abroad, its Maintenance Flight Commander, SQNLDR Rebecca Willis said.

“We’ve previously deployed via an Australian C-17, and on board HMNZS Canterbury, on a number of occasions,” SQNLDR Willis said.

“Last year, we took three NH90s to Exercise Talisman Sabre (in Queensland) and we deployed two aircraft in support of the Solomon Islands election in 2019.”

The NH90 can accommodate up to 18 passengers or lift several tonnes of equipment, making them useful in carrying Defence personnel, emergency services, or even civilian evacuees in areas ravaged by bushfires.

Each helicopter weighs 6.7 tonnes for transport (up to 11 tonnes in flying configuration) and the C-17A carried one NH90 at a time to Australia.

To fit inside the C-17A’s cargo bay, the NH90’s main and tail rotor blades are removed, and the aircraft’s tail section needs to be ‘folded’ during the loading and unloading process.

Loadmasters, air movements personnel and RNZAF technicians carefully move the helicopter onto the C-17A’s cargo ramp using a winch and secure it to the floor of the cargo cabin.

For the three-hour trip across the Tasman, the C-17A also carried RNZAF personnel, servicing equipment and the helicopter’s rotor blades, which were individually packed into purpose-built trunks.

On the evening of January 6, the C-17A touched down at RAAF Base Richmond with the first NH90 on board.

RAAF Base Richmond was chosen over Nowra as the location to reassemble the NH90s because it had parking space and spare hangars for No. 3 Squadron to work in.

By the evening of January 10, all three NH90s had been assembled at RAAF Base Richmond and flown to Nowra.

No hesitation to get on board

FLGOFF Evita Ryan

SIMILAR equipment and procedures make the process of integrating into other air lift teams much easier than one might think.

That’s why RNZAF FLTLT Emily Hall and her team of three LACs were able to hit the ground running at No. 23 Squadron’s air movements terminal within 24 hours of arriving at RAAF Base Amberley in Ipswich, Queensland.

“We watched the impact of the bushfires and felt powerless” FLTLT Hall said, speaking on behalf of her Mobile Air Load Team (MALT).

FLTLT Hall and her team were quick to act when they were given the opportunity to support Operation Bushfire Assist.

“They were all on leave when I called them but everyone flew out to Australia the next day.”

Temporarily accommodated at RAAF Base Amberley and working from the base’s air movements’ terminal, FLTLT Hall and her team felt right at home.

“The procedures are the same, the culture’s the same, even the banter’s the same – it’s like being at home,” FLTLT Hall said. “Only this time, we do our job, do what we’re good at whilst actually having a positive impact on Operation Bushfire Assist.”

A major part of the efficient and effective movement of personnel and material to support Air Force’s activities, operations and exercises, aircraft load teams working from RAAF Base Amberley have been running two shifts a day and working eight to 10 hours a shift to support Operation Bushfire Assist.

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FLGOFF Evita Ryan

IT WAS volunteering with his pop and seeing the work of the ADF clearing out flood-damaged homes during the 2011 Queensland floods that inspired LAC Clay Brown to join Air Force.

A plant operator for No. 65 Squadron in Townsville, LAC Brown and his 850J dozer worked with Army’s 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment to build a 70km firebreak in the Bondo State Forest near Tumut, NSW, for Forestry Corporation of NSW.

They were joined by additional plant operators and their heavy machinery from No. 65 Squadron in Townsville. The firebreak was constructed adjacent to a fire trail in the Bondo State Forest to help protect the nearby pine plantation.

“Depending on the terrain, the team was able to clear roughly 1km a day. Some of it’s flat but most of it is either up or down and some patches have big boulders that are hard to push over, as well as some large trees,” LAC Brown said.

“We started on Sunday 12 January and it feels like slow progress until you look back and realise how far you’ve actually gone.”

Before joining the Air Force in 2012, LAC Brown was a concrete labourer, working with his uncle as well as in mines in Dalby and Chinchilla, west of Brisbane. He grew up in Wynnum and Manly in Brisbane’s southern bayside and originally applied to be an Air Force carpenter before being offered a plant operator role.

LAC Brown said it was the feeling of helping out the community and emergency services during a time of need that drove his choice to join the ADF. “That’s what got my attention – the disaster relief work and humanitarian aid that the ADF provides,” he said.

LAC Brown was unable to help his own local community in Townsville when the city and surrounding areas flooded in early 2019 because of training commitments. One year later, the phone call to pack his bags and get ready to support Operation Bushfire Assist came as a surprise.

“I thought they were joking – I was on leave in Townsville, watching all the damage the fires caused and wishing there was something I could do to help,” he said.

To be a part of this operation is just amazing and it’s rewarding to assist the selfless volunteers who are out fighting fires. “I’m definitely happy with how things turned out for me, career wise. “As a kid, I loved playing with Tonka trucks and diggers in the sand. “It’s every boy’s dream to be able to drive the big ones.”

Leaving his wife and two kids at home so he could support Operation Bushfire Assist, he said the families in the background didn’t always receive the recognition they deserved.

“The fettles, Defence personnel, all the partner organisations, they’re all doing a really great job, but let’s not forget about the families back home,” he said.

“They’re all doing it tough as well as they’re missing their loved ones who are helping out the regions in need and there are plenty of people in those fire-affected areas who have felt the impact of these bushfires.”

FLGOFF Evita Ryan

TOWNVILLE: The firebreak was constructed adjacent to a fire trail in the Bondo State Forest to help protect the nearby pine plantation.

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Eamon Hamilton

A COBHAM Control Team (CCT) from No. 8 Sqdn was commissioned to support bushfire relief flights to the most remote and isolated communities of Mallacoota in Victoria. On arriving at the Mallacoota Airfield, the four-man team undertook the monumental task of clearing and preparing the airfield, crucial to facilitate relief efforts.

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FLTLT Brendon Carraro displayed great composure during an emergency over Iraq, Eamon Hamilton writes.

The safe resolution of an in-flight emergency over Iraq has led FLTLT Brendon Carraro to be recognised in the 2020 Australia Day Honours list.

FLTLT Carraro was awarded the Commendation for Distinguished Service (CDS) for his actions as the captain of a RAAF C-130J Hercules transport aircraft during a mission in the Middle East region (MER) on August 27, 2017.

The aircraft, call sign MAMBO 21 – was on a night mission in support of Operation Okra when the crew experienced a massive failure of the aircraft’s electrical system and primary flight instruments.

The incident was the first failure of its kind for any C-130J Hercules in the worldwide fleet. However, the crew was able to use backup instruments to safely land with its 29 passengers at Baghdad International Airport.

In being awarded the CDS for his actions, the citation for FLTLT Carraro stated he demonstrated superior pilot ing skill, airmanship, and leadership in “a safe and successful night landing of his seriously degraded aircraft”.

The citation also read that “His conduct of a safe night landing at an Iraq airfield saved his aircraft, his crew and the 29 passengers on board.”

But FLTLT Carraro said he was under no illusion the safe landing in Baghdad was anything but a team effort.

“I wouldn’t have been able to do this without my co-pilot and loadmasters feeding me the right information at the right time. We would not have had such a favourable outcome,” FLTLT Carraro said.

“The crew’s actions were critical to achieving a safe landing and are commendable.”

“The actions of our two aircraft maintainers and two airfield defence guards on board were equally notable following the evacuation of the aircraft on the ground.”

FLTLT Carraro is currently posted to RAAF Base East Sale in Victoria. Originally from Newcastle, he worked with BAE Systems Australia at RAAF Base Williamtown before joining the Air Force in March 2011.

“While working as an avionics aircraft maintenance engineer, maintaining Air Force fast jets when I decided that I’d rather fly them than fix them,” FLTLT Carraro said.

After completing Officer Training School at RAAF Base East Sale, FLTLT Carraro graduated the RAAF’s Advanced Pilot Training Course in March 2013.

“He was then posted to No. 37 Squadron at RAAF Base Richmond in Sydney’s north-west to learn to fly the C-130J Hercules transport aircraft. Introduced to RAAF service in 1999, the C-130J Hercules can carry more than 100 passengers or up to 20 tonnes of cargo.

“The Hercules can operate everywhere from small, semi-prepared airfields to major international airports, making it an important logistics link from small, semi-prepared airfields to major international airports, making it an important logistics link.”

The job will see FLTLT Carraro being awarded the Commendation for Distinguished Service.

“I was both humbled and speechless when notified that I was being nominated,” he said.

“The ripples of this event are still evident for me today. “The support from my wife Teresa, my family, close friends and the C-130 teams I’ve deployed with have been outstanding and for that I am extremely grateful.”

His wife, FLTLT Teresa Carraro, is a logistics officer in the Air Force, and said she was proud of her husband’s achievement.

“The award nomination was very unexpected, but it is representative of who he is and the remarkable pilot and leader that I have seen him become,” she said.

The fault also affected engine instrumentation, radio control panels, and the status of critical aircraft systems like landing gear brakes, and hydraulic systems.

Navigation displays were also inoperable as the crew of MAMBO 21 flew in night skies over Iraq.

The fault also affected engine instrumentation, radio control panels, and the status of critical aircraft systems like landing gear brakes, and hydraulic systems.

The crew immediately directed the aircraft to be configured for landing, with flaps extended and landing gear lowered, and the crew declared a Mayday call on the radio.

“The crew managed a safe landing into Baghdad without any damage to the aircraft and passengers were safely evacuated by the loadmasters and airfield defence guards.”

Investigations into the faults revealed an unprecedented failure had occurred with the computers on MAMBO 21. Two back-up computers on the aircraft reported contradictory information with the aircraft’s two primary mission computers, leading to a degradation across aircraft systems in the cockpit.

The failure had never before been experienced in more than 20 years and 1.3 million flight hours of C-130J operations by any operator.

The Hercules maintenance team that repaired MAMBO 21 was awarded a group award from the Air Force Group Command in November 2018 – the first time such a group award had been presented to the Air Force.

In late 2017, FLTLT Carraro completed his tour with 37SQN on the C-130J Hercules, and was posted to East Sale.

As of January 2020, he is posted to the Central Flying School at RAAF Base East Sale, and is awaiting a Flying Instructor Course. Once he graduates from this course, he’ll join No. 1 Flying Training School at East Sale as a qualified flying instructor.

The job will see FLTLT Carraro teaching the next generation of Air Force, Navy and Army pilots how to fly.

“Despite all of the training, nothing could have prepared anyone for the challenges we faced during this incident,” he said.

“I’ve learned that a thorough understanding of systems and rules will enable an individual to make the best risk-based decisions to achieve a favourable outcome in time-critical situations.”

“Making those calculated risk-assessed decisions is something that all leaders and pilots should be prepared to do.”

In October 2019, FLTLT Carraro was notified that he would be awarded the Commendation for Distinguished Service.

“The three loadmasters on board were equally notable following the evacuation of the aircraft and airfield defence guards. Providing me support throughout the emergency was exemplary. It enabled me to focus on flying the aircraft,” FLTLT Carraro said.

“The three loadmasters on board were crucial to developing situational understanding as aircraft systems continued to degrade.”

“Their identification of the hydraulic system failures that occurred on the aircraft, and provided considering to the pilots for landing. Flying the aircraft was achieved by feel and through the standby instruments. I navigated visually through my night vision goggles while improvising some spatial awareness by utilising the GPS on my iPad.”

The award nomination was very unexpected, but it is representative of who he is and the remarkable pilot and leader that I have seen him become,” she said.
Member of the Order of Australia (AM) – Military Division

AIRCDRE Wendy Blyth
For exceptional service to the ADF in C-130J Super Hercules sustainment reform, and in P-8A Poseidon capability development and system sustainment.

AIRCDRE Philip Gordon
For exceptional service in aerospace capability development, air combat preparedness and operations management and control for the ADF.

GPCAPT Leanne Lee
For exceptional service in airworthiness practice, F-35 operational certification, and E-7A airborne early warning and control sustainment for the ADF.

AIRCDRE Kenneth Robinson
For exceptional service to the ADF in international engagement, personnel management and administration, and combat support development and sustainment.

AIRCDRE Gerald van Leeuwen
For exceptional service to the ADF in aerospace capability development, major capital acquisition, and air combat sustainment.

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) – Military Division

WOFF Rudolf Vitasz
For meritorious service to the ADF in leadership and cultural development.

WOFF Benjamin Wright
For meritorious service in personnel recognition administration, major public relations initiatives, and organisational development in the RAAF.

Conspicuous Service Cross (CSC)

SQNLDR Janine Fetchik
For outstanding achievement in aircrew human factors performance management and air safety accident investigation for the ADF.

SGT William Gill
For outstanding achievements in unmanned aerial system capability enhancement in the RAAF.

SONLDR Sean Hamilton
For outstanding achievement in fighter aircraft tactics development and training in the RAAF.

SONLDR Craig Keane
For outstanding achievement in E-7A Wedgetail aircraft communications information systems and security support for the ADF.

Conspicuous Service Medal (CSM)

GPCAPT Robert Elliott
For meritorious achievement in leading, planning and delivering critical intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting effects for Joint Operations Command.

FSGT Tanya Fraser
For meritorious devotion to duty in organisational administration and management as the Administrator for Specialist Legal Reserve Services in the RAAF.

WGCDR Kylie Green
For meritorious achievement in logistics employment initiatives, operational preparedness, and force generation development for the RAAF.

CPL Lachlan O’Kane
For meritorious achievement as the surveillance technician in Air Task Group 630.1.4 whilst deployed on Operation Okra from August 2018 to February 2019.

SONLDR Brayden Pirlo
For meritorious devotion to duty in development and delivery of the first technical cyber threat intelligence capability for the ADF.

SGT Justin Regan
For meritorious achievement in air surveillance in the Defence Signals Intelligence and Cyber Command.

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Australian Defence Force members gather with residents of Kangaroo Island during the Australia Day ceremony held at Kingscote. Photo: LCPL Brodie Cross
A leader by example

CPL Veronica O’Hara

AFTER several years developing airman in his roles as Group Warrant Officer and Senior Enlisted Adviser, WOFF Rudi Vitasz received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Military Division.

WOFF Vitasz was recognised for meritorious service to the ADF in leadership and cultural development in the Australia Day Honours on January 26.

“Taking tech to new heights

CPL Veronica O’Hara

IN THREE years, SGT William Gill’s concept of an unmanned aerial system (UAS) is a step closer to applying the capability within SECFOR’s squadrons.

In March, the airfield defence guard team received a Conspicuous Service Cross for his achievements in implementing an unmanned aerial capability in Air Force.

SGT Gill said the capability would aid with counter-UAS in the defence of security doors for Air Force units.

The trial went beyond air base security operations. SGT Gill said they assisted Army with counter-UAS during exercises and payload delivery on advance reconnaissance courses, worked with civilian police and used the UAS to conduct aircraft maintenance inspections on 11SQN’s P-8A Poseidon aircraft.

“IT’S using technology to enhance a security benefit for a base,” SGT Gill said.

A 12-month trial with militarised platforms recently finished after his idea three years ago started with a common DJI drone to prove the concept.

“Now we’re hoping to take the next step forward – to purchase and fit out each SECTOR SQN with a UAS for a business-as-usual capability,” he said.

SGT Gill said the capability would reduce the time and resources needed to do routine tasks of searching perimeters or the bush around an airfield.

“Because of the man hours to conduct airfield searches, a UAS would save time, resources and mean you’re not working your workforce as much,” he said.

I invented time and provided opportunities for this airman to be exposed to other parts of our organisation and be immersed in parts of the business that they would not normally be exposed.

“Only recently I discovered the huge, positive impact that this opportunity had on them.

“IT was quite profound.”

A video about the concept can be found at: https://youtu.be/BntAquXriSw

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Help is available through the Partner Employment Assistance Program.

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Visit www.defence.gov.au/dco, call 1800 624 608 or email defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au

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It was the end of an era when the PC-9/A flew over RAAF Base Pearce, FLTTLT Tracey Bowman writes.

**Parnering pace and performance**

**Eamon Hamilton**

**THE PC-9/A's journey to Australian service began in the early 1980s, with the RAFF's search for a new basic training aircraft.**

At the time, the RAFF operated two training aircraft, with student pilots learning to fly on the CT-4A with No. 1 Flying Training School at RAAF Base Point Cook.

On graduation from the CT-4A, students moved on to the Aermacchi MB-328 – better known as the Macchi – a jet-powered advanced trainer, with No. 2 Flying Training School at RAAF Base Pearce.

While the CT-4A had only been introduced to service in 1975, the RAFF believed the aircraft's fatigue life was limited.

A new basic trainer was developed by the Australian Aircraft Consortium (AAC). Called the A10A Waminda, it looked like a cross between a CT-4A and a PC-9, and construction of a prototype was underway when the Australian Government decided on a competition for a replacement trainer.

In December 1985, the Pilatus PC-9 – modified as the PC-9/A – was selected to replace the CT-4A as the RAFF's basic trainer. For this role, RAFF PC-9/A would be modified to operate from unsealed grass runways.

This resulted in the aircraft being fitted with a heavier landing gear from the older Pilatus PC-7 training aircraft, which in turn led to several aircraft systems being modified or removed to save weight. The PC-9/A was fitted with a world-leading semi-glass cockpit. Not long after the PC-9/A was chosen, the RAFF assessed the CT-4A fleet as having a greater fatigue life than expected – while the Macchi advanced trainer had fatigue issues that would soon need to be addressed.

Originally acquired as a basic trainer, the PC-9/A would now be the RAFF's new advanced trainer instead, retaining its Australian modifications.

The first two aircraft were constructed at the Pilatus factory in Switzerland and ferried to Australia in November 1987.

They were used to develop pilot training and instructor curriculums at RAAF Base East Sale.

The next six PC-9/A were manufactured from kits made in Australia, with their final construction at the Hawker de Havilland plant at Bankstown in Sydney.

Another 11 aircraft were built using parts from Switzerland and Australia, and the remaining 48 airframes were manufactured and assembled within Australia.

To obtain flight data for the Australian PC-9/A, flight trials with two aircraft were conducted by the RAFF's Aircraft Research and Development Unit.

The initial pilots' course to fly the PC-9/A – a trial of eight students as part of No. 151 Pilots Course – commenced in September 1989 and graduated in late 1990.

GPCAPT Peter Norford was a Flight Commander with No. 2 Flying Training School when the PC-9/A replaced the Macchi. “The PC-9/A was easier to maintain than the Macchi, with more performance, and was generally safer and lower risk than the Macchi,” GPCAPT Norford said.

“During the advanced pilot course is one of the most challenging courses the ADF runs, and I congratulate all of the graduates for this impressive achievement. Enjoy the celebration and get ready for a fantastic career ahead of you.”

“PC-9/A”s cockpit was not pressurised and it was limited to normal student ops not above 25,000 feet and it could not replicate the conditions and flight characteristics of high-speed flight like in a jet-powered aircraft.

This led to the formation of No. 25 Squadron at RAAF Base Pearce; which was equipped with Macchis to provide pilots with a ‘Lead-in Fighter’ conversion on their path to flying the F/A-18 and F-111.

The PC-9/A's modern design and general reliability, however, gave it several advantages over the Macchi, especially for student pilots.

“One of the standouts in the PC-9/A's 30 years of service was its much better safety record than the Macchi,” GPCAPT Norford said.
Clearing the path

Becoming an air mobility officer in the Air Force is a rare feat, writes Eamon Hamilton.

Flying a KC-30A multi-role tanker transport, FLGOFF Borrillo became the first new air mobility officer (AMO) in Air Force since 2011.

His graduation signals a new pathway for aircrew to serve on the KC-30A and FLGOFF Borrillo said he was looking forward to the opportunities.

"Due to the dynamic nature of the role, it opens up a lot of opportunities for moving passengers, cargo and aircraft around the world," FLGOFF Borrillo said. "That creates chances to be involved in exercises and operations with a lot of other nations, and I’m keen to see where this role can take me."

In the next 12 months alone, 33SQN KC-30As will ferry more than 92,000 passengers, 17,000 pieces of cargo and dangerous goods, and move over 2,000 tons of fuel.

"The KC-30A, however, has demonstrated the need for AMOs, who can build on the experience with air-to-air refuelling and share that knowledge when Defence plans future tanking operations," FLGOFF Borrillo said.

"It was brought to my attention that AMO was a possible streaming option, so I put my hand up for it."

The AMO role on the KC-30A is for a specific role, FLGOFF Borrillo said. "The biggest challenge has been getting up to speed with all areas of the role," FLGOFF Borrillo said.

"The KC-30A is also open to enlisted aircrew who wish to commission and to officer aircrew, including pilots or ACOs from other aircraft types. All candidates must complete specialised training to serve on the KC-30A."

"I've completed courses in loadmaster base, KC-30A cargo loading, and dangerous goods packing and acceptance," FLGOFF Borrillo said. "These were along with the ARO course (at RAAF Base Amberley), which includes 13 simulator events at CAE Australia and seven conversion flights conducted at the squadron."

From the ARO console in the KC-30A’s cockpit, FLGOFF Borrillo manages the aircraft’s suite of refuelling systems.

This includes hose-and-drogue refuelling pods mounted beneath the KC-30A’s wings, and an 11m refuelling boom mounted under the tail.

In flight, the boom extends 17m in length and is controlled by an ARO using 3D glasses and remote cameras.

Civilian instructors with CAE Australia are responsible for teaching students how to operate the KC-30A’s air-to-air refuelling systems in a training facility at RAAF Base Amberley.

"It has been challenging to develop and maintain proficiency in all areas," FLGOFF Borrillo said. "If anyone is interested in applying, I would thoroughly encourage them to do so – it’s a very niche role with an exciting future."

For more information scan the QR code, or visit www.soldieron.org.au/march-on/
The Air Force champions were crowned after a hard-fought five weeks of competition in the 2020 CrossFit Open, a worldwide competition of more than 230,000 athletes in more than 150 countries.

This is the first CrossFit Championships since CrossFit was formally recognised as an Air Force sport in May 2019.

CrossFit has been used by military personnel as a way to improve fitness since its inception as a training methodology in the 1990s and is now one of the fastest-growing competitive sports in the world.

RAAF CrossFit Association vice-president FLTLT Alan Edwards said that Australia there were more than 500 CrossFit gyms (known as “boxes”), with many run by current and ex-serving personnel.

“With this growth of CrossFit as a training method and a competitive sport, it comes as no surprise that Alana Edwards said that in Australia there were more athletes in more than 150 countries.

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Honoured to be selected

LS Kylie Jagiello

AS a kid growing up in Penrith, Tayla Seymour’s siblings were into the evening gowns and catwalks of beauty contests. But Tayla was more interested in competitions of a different kind. “I came from a family where my older sisters were into beauty pageants, however, I went against the grain and got into cricket instead,” LACW Seymour said.

LACW Seymour showed so much potential as a cricketer, one of her teachers urged her dad to get her into a local team. Lucky he did, because 20 years later, LACW Seymour, with 26 Squadron, achieved one of the highest milestones of her cricketing career by being selected for the Governor-General’s XI representative squad.

After the shock selection, the 26-year-old batter took the field at Drummoyne Oval for a January 28 fixture against India.

“With the fantastic environment of both the RAAF and ADF teams, it has restored my love for the sport and I am happy with where my cricket career is going in the ADF,” she said.

Nerves were only natural before the game but LACW Seymour didn’t let that get in the way of having an awesome experience, with her family and friends watching on.

With the game in the balance, the Governor-General’s XI team surged to an impressive five-wicket win against India.

“We went out fielding first and I was either in the mid-on position or third man,” LACW Seymour said.

“I was originally going to be the ninth batsman but they bumped me up and I would have batted next if one more batsman had gone out.”

Final scores were India 5-113 and the Governor-General’s XI 5-114 with six balls remaining.

The Governor-General’s XI match, which is inspired by the traditional Prime Minister’s XI game, pits some of the best young female players in Australia against a touring team. The Governor-General’s XI squad is a cross-section of young up-and-comers and experienced campaigners.

LACW Tayla Seymour captains the ADF and RAAF cricket teams and took the field for the G-G’s XI against India.

Photo OS, Craig Barrett

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ADF skipper selected for G-G’s XI

LACW Tayla Seymour represented Australia in the Governor-General’s XI cricket team that played India at Drummoyne Oval on January 28.

Photo: CPL Craig Barrett