Air Force celebrates 20 years with the C-130J Hercules

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Five C-130J Hercules, of No. 37 Squadron, fly in formation over the mid-north coast to celebrate 20 years of C-130J operations in Australia.
Photo: OR Sheed Sart
CPL Sebastian Beurich

THE race to see which service can save the most lives has kicked off for 2019, with the launch of the Defence Blood Challenge in Canberra on September 5.

With more than 9500 donations made during the 2018 challenge, CAF AIRMSHL Mel Hupfeld said Defence was aiming to step up to the plate and give blood or plasma more than 9000 times this year.

“Through the Defence Blood Challenge, we have the opportunity to draw on our commitment to serve and make a life-saving impact in our community,” he said.

“A single blood donation can save the lives of up to three Australians and the gift of plasma can be used to treat a range of patients, helping those with serious burns, cancer or brain disease.

“The demand for blood and plasma continues to grow, so there’s always more we can do.”

“This year, we aim to roll up our sleeves at least 9000 times to help those who rely on blood products to stay alive or see through a serious illness.”

AIRMSHL Hupfeld was joined by CN V ADM Michael Noonan and Army Headquarters COS BMG Kahil Fegan in setting the example by giving the first donations of the challenge.

Australian Red Cross Blood Service Chief Executive Shelly Park praised Defence’s support of the challenge, contributing at least 110,000 donations in more than 10 years.

“The Blood Challenge helps save thousands of lives every year and has a lasting impact on the lives of recipients as well as their families and friends,” she said.

“The Red Cross Blood Service cannot thank Defence personnel and their families enough for their support.”

The challenge, Australia’s longest-running annual blood drive, will run until December 8.

More information is available at your local donation centre, or online at donateblood.com.au/raaftb.

When it comes to donating plasma, the focus is on family for FSGT Josa Kohler.

FSGT Kohler, of the ADF-Warfare Training Centre at RAAF Base Williamtown, said encouragement from her husband first got her into the donor chair.

“I started giving blood because of my husband, Scotty, who has been donating for a long time and will go out of his way to make a donation,” she said.

“Scotty was first inspired by a co-worker whose brother suffered from leukaemia and relied on regular donations to stay alive.

“I knew after my first donation that it was the right thing to do.”

FSGT Kohler and her husband are now regular plasma donors and also donate up to three times during this year’s Defence Blood Challenge.

“In the past few years I’ve switched over to donating plasma after the Red Cross staff explained the benefits of plasma and how it’s always in demand,” she said.

“Scotty and I try to get to the donor centre once a month, where we see and hear stories of people who have had, and some who are still having, lifesaving donations.

“It’s such an easy thing for us to do but it makes all the difference to someone else.”

Regular donations also offer FSGT Kohler and her husband some important time together.

“Once a month, our Thursday evening at the donor centre turns into date night. We call it our milkshake date,” she said.

“The staff at this centre are amazing and we’ve gotten to know them over the years.

“They tease Scotty about taking me somewhere special for dinner. Instead, after the donation we will sit and enjoy a milkshake, party pies and sausage rolls.”

FSGT Kohler urged those considering giving blood or plasma in this year’s Defence Blood Challenge to think about who is impacted by your donation.

“Think of the lifesaving effort you are contributing to,” she said.

“You will not only make a difference to the person requiring blood or plasma, but their families and friends as well.”
A N ENGINE failure is an odd place to start your career, but it’s what the newest member of Air Force’s senior leadership team says helped shape almost 30 years of service.

As the inaugural Head Air Force Capability – and only non-aircrew member of Air Force’s executive – AVM Catherine Roberts describes her position as being the “champion for air power capability.”

“I am responsible for shaping our future force and leading the management of capability across its entire life cycle – from setting requirements to disposal,” she said.

The future is not just about aircraft, according to AVM Roberts, who said making sure Air Force had the right people in the right positions was a key part of her position – something she’s still coming to grips with. “I have a really broad remit. I’m not just looking at platforms but all of the fundamental inputs to those capabilities, and people play a huge part in that,” she said.

Being an engineer is useful from the technology perspective, but it doesn’t help you with the people piece – getting the right people, innovative people, moving into the future.

“A lot of what we do is about influencing people to behave in a certain way, or an industry partnership so we can work closely with them. It’s almost a diplomatic skill.

“We know the future force needs more people with a STEM background and we have a number of programs working towards that, but we also need people who are good influencers – something I haven’t cracked yet.”

As a science-fiction fan, when AVMs Roberts thinks of the future, she thinks of a problem – like if your warp drive goes offline,” AVM Roberts said.

“I think we’ll have something a bit flashier than the Enterprise though – that’s 70s technology. I don’t know what, but I think it will be better.”

Although she’s worked on or with almost all the platforms Air Force has used over the past 30 years, AVM Roberts said the Mirage III was the most memorable.

“The second flight I went on, we had an engine failure … The Mirage only had a single engine,” she said. “It was a beautiful aircraft, but having that failure, diving down and losing all orientation, thinking ‘oh my god I’m going to have to try and remember about this handle thing’, that’s what sticks in my memory.

“Luckily, the aircraft recovered and we didn’t have to abandon it, but that probably encouraged me into some airworthiness roles in the future.

“We’ve come a long way since then and I’m honoured there was enough confidence in my background to give me this job.

“I’ve had a lot to do with air power, but being able to do this job and use my knowledge – both technically and about getting capabilities operations – is a great privilege.”

An early scare in the air gave our latest senior leader a handle on the future, CPL Sebastian Beurich writes.

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A flight in eerie silence

Eamon Hamilton

THROUGHOUT its history, 37SQN has often been first on the scene during times of crisis. Not the least of these times was immediately after the Al Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001. In what SQNLDR Michael Crooks, one of the pilots involved, described as a “significant but little known” part of Air Force’s C-130J story, a 37SQN Hercules was among the first aircraft to land in New York City after the attacks.

SQNLDR Kevin Bruce, now a reservist instructor with 37SQN, said the crew was in Atlanta, Georgia, testing an upgrade to the C-130J at Dobbins Air Base next door to Lockheed Martin’s C-130 Hercules manufacturing plant.

“The pilots over there were FLTLTs Jayson Livingstone and Michael Crooks as the co-pilots,” SQNLDR Bruce said.

Dobbins Air Base was filled with commercial airliners in the days following the attacks.

Atlanta also happened to be the home to the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). GPCAPT Steve Bucholtz, the Assistant Air Attaché in Washington, D.C., received a request to ferry CDC personnel and equipment to New York.

“To some extent, this was because the US Air Force command chain was focused on recovery from the attack on the Pentagon, as well as responding in other areas,” SQNLDR Bruce said.

The CDC team would investigate the site and the environment for decades before and the decades since were and are a continual buzz of activity was literally silent,” SQNLDR Crooks said.

“The CDC team and the intermediaries were truly grateful for the assistance the RAAF was providing during an unprecedented moment in their nation’s history,” SQNLDR Crooks said.

The Hercules carried 31 passengers for the two-and-a-half hour flight to New York.

“The only other air traffic were fighter aircraft on combat air patrol missions, and refuelling tankers. “The flight up was eerie – airspace for decades before and the decades since were and are a continual buzz of activity was literally silent,” SQNLDR Crooks said.

“We were handed from one air traffic controller to another with little more than a welcome, then silence. This was on airwaves that are typically a continual stream of control instructions and replies.

“We were often thanked with sincerity and transferred to the next controller, where the scene was repeated.”

Both the weather and air traffic around New York on September 14 contrasted heavily with that of September 11. “The arrival into LaGuardia Airport was truly surreal. The airfield had been closed since September 11 and the weather was poor, with low cloud and showers about,” SQNLDR Crooks said.

If this had been the weather 72 hours earlier, how would the events of September 11, and the geo-strategic events that followed, have played out?

“We approached the airfield from the south, roughly paralleling Manhattan Island. Through breaks in the cloud I can still recall seeing the gap in the skyline where the towers had stood three days before.”

The C-130J was the first aircraft to land at LaGuardia Airport since all airline traffic had been grounded.

With the CDC team unloaded, the RAAF C-130J departed for Atlanta a few hours later, and resumed testing on the upgrade the following week.

“The more time that passes, the more I realise that this was a moment in time that was unique in every aspect,” SQNLDR Crooks said.
Exercise Mini Burrow

FLTLT Kat Trimble

IT TAKES individuals with specialist skill sets to remove explosive remnants of war and establish an airbase in an austere environment, but that’s exactly what RAAF and US Air Force personnel did during Exercise Mini Burrow.

Airfield and armament engineers, airfield engineering trades and armament technicians, of 65SQN, worked alongside their USAF counterparts in a scenario based on a contingency response squadron deployment to a degraded WWII airfield in the Pacific region.

The simulated humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operation involved exercise participants establishing basic airfield services at a degraded airfield, while managing unexploded ordinance (UXO) hazards.

CO 65SQN WGCDR Stuart Mattner said RAAF and USAF personnel were able to refine, exchange and enhance essential, but highly specialised techniques such as UXO deep search and rapid explosive hazard mitigation.

“Aside from the advances made in improving our techniques and processes, importantly, 65SQN members have enhanced the relationships that they have forged with their PACAF (USAF Pacific Air Force) peers on recent exercises Silver Flag and Cope North,” WGCDR Mattner said.

“Mini Burrow has consolidated the individual and collective skills of 65SQN personnel that are essential to Air Force providing an integrated airbase recovery (ABR) capability that is interoperable in the joint environment,” WGCDR Mattner said.

Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) Sgt Paul Greaves said it wasn’t just about the USAF and RAAF working together, but also the airfield engineering trades and armament technicians learning how to best and safely work with each other’s capabilities.

“RAAF personnel taught USAF the techniques we use for UXO deep search, essentially the methods we use to safely locate a bomb that has penetrated deep under the ground,” Sgt Greaves said.

“The unexploded bombs (UXBs) that we are searching for have likely been delivered by aircraft travelling at high speeds and from high altitude – as a result, they have a lot of energy when they impact.

“UXBs can be 10-15 metres underground – the USAF were impressed at our unique ability to readily access machinery to perform deep search.

“The two trades come together as an integrated ABR team to find and reduce the hazard as safely as possible.

“EOD technicians need to get to the bomb to make it safe. Our unit plant operators make that possible with precision excavation works,” Sgt Greaves said.

“The experience we gain in these training scenarios is essential in getting the job done safely and to return the airbase to operating capacity.”

WHILE RAAF taught the US Air Force the slow and steady way to remove unexploded bombs, USAF personnel shared their methods for rapidly clearing an airfield stown with submunitions.

USAF personnel shared their expertise in rapid explosive hazard mitigation (REHM) techniques and explained the ways in which they make a deliberate assessment of the explosive ordnance and make the airstrip safe.

“REHM is about setting up a minimum operating strip to allow aircraft to land or get them back in the air,” FLTLT Shubdeep Bhangra said.

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Engineering to impress

EXERCISE Mini Burrow was about being brilliant at the basics and honing individual technical trade skills. This included 65SQN’s ability to perform contingency engineering in wartime and disaster relief situations.

Trade specialists from US Air Force PACAF’s No. 554 Redhorse Squadron were partnered with 65SQN airbase recovery (ABR) tradespersons to test their skills in remediating airbase infrastructure.

OIC Airfield Engineering FLGOFF Sean Wrigley explained that members shared their methods in recovering, constructing and maintaining resilient airbase infrastructure.

“We had team members installing guttering, carpenters building stairs, plumbers remediating culverts and exploring different ways to construct secure vehicle check points,” FLGOFF Wrigley said.

“The range at Defence Establishment Orchard Hills offers an expansive training area and the USAF were impressed with our professionalism and appreciated all the hands-on training opportunities.”

Eligibility for the Australian Defence Medal and Long Service Medals

• Eligibility for the Australian Defence Medal and for Long Service Medals (such as the Defence Long Service Medal/DLSM) is calculated on ENLISTMENT/APPOINTMENT YEAR (whichever is earlier). Not calendar or financial year.

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Cheers to a heavy lifter

Eamon Hamilton

AN ADF workhorse, the C-130J Hercules, has marked 20 years since entering service with the Air Force.

On September 1999, the first of 12 Hercules transport aircraft was introduced to service with 37SQN at RAAF Base Richmond.

The fleet has amassed 137,000 flying hours over two decades and is expected to continue flying until at least 2030.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary, a formation of Hercules aircraft took to the skies over RAAF bases Glenbrook and Richmond on September 6. The flight coincided with a reunion, held by the 37SQN Association, for past and present members of the C-130J workforce.

As with past variants of the Hercules flown since December 1958, the Air Force uses the C-130J to carry personnel, cargo and equipment into semi-prepared airfields with little or no support infrastructure. And, like its predecessors, the C-130J can airdrop cargo and paratroops, fly aeromedical evacuation missions and perform search-and-rescue duties at sea.

OC 84WG GPCAPT Nicholas Hogan said the C-130J fleet had spent much of its time supporting the ADF on deployed operations.

“Defence’s operational tempo has been at consistently high for the past 20 years so it has been a time when all 12 C-130Js were at home at once,” GPCAPT Hogan said.

“The nature of 37SQN’s work with the C-130J is often short notice, dynamic in nature and requiring flexibility in how they approach problems and execute their mission.

“Behind this workhorse is a support network from Defence and industry that has helped sustain and develop the C-130J.”

Originally, the C-130J was intended as a strategic airlift replacement for the ageing C-130H fleet. It differed from previous Hercules models by having more powerful engines, a longer fuselage that could carry more cargo and advanced avionics for navigation and management of systems.

Due to its higher tempo, the C-130J fleet was modified to fly on tactical operations in 2004, allowing it to supplement the work of the older C-130H Hercules.

The C-130J was fitted with self-protection systems and 37SQN crews trained for airlift operations in which they could come under enemy fire.

From 2004 until 2008, the C-130J workforce rotated responsibility in the Middle East with the C-130Js. Since July 2008, the C-130J has been continuously deployed in theatre.

In December 2006, Defence introduced the C-17A as a strategic airlifter, leaving the C-130J to concentrate on tactical airlifting. That responsibility has kept the C-130J workforce busy throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

“When you look at airlift missions in the region, the C-130J has the right combination of range, payload and airfield access to support a number of missions,” GPCAPT Hogan said.

“As a case in point, in February we launched several C-130Js to the NT for a mission to evacuate remote communities in Groote Eylandt, which was being threatened by a cyclone.

“The workhorse has likewise been called on to support short-notice tasks with aeromedical evacuation for the Bali bombings and hospital evacuations in Queensland.”

The C-130J has been supported by the Air Lift Systems Office, part of Defence’s Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group. The office is responsible for managing the fleet’s engineering and sustainment needs and works with Air Force to plant upgrades for the C-130J. Some of these upgrades are driven by the demands of a 21st-century working environment, including the evolution of a fifth-generation Air Force with the arrival of the F-35A Lightning II.

The C-130Js are now connected to the Link-16 battlespace network, allowing crews to share information with friendly aircraft on operations. A satellite communications antenna on each C-130J also allows crew and passengers access to global voice and data transmission.

“The C-130J was an advanced aircraft when it was introduced in 1999, and further upgrades have kept it a very modern aircraft today,” GPCAPT Hogan said.

“Defence and industry are finding new ways to apply technology to this airframe, and some of these applications were difficult to imagine 20 years ago.

“When you consider the C-130J has life ahead of it in the RAAF, it’s exciting to consider what capability and missions it will support in the future.”

MILESTONE MOMENTS

1995: Decision to purchase the C-130J for the RAAF.
1997: First flight of C-130J A97-446 at Dobbins Air Base in US.
1999: Delivery of first C-130J to Australia.
2002: Aeromedical evacuation support to Bali bombings.
2003: Delivery of aid to Iranian city of Bam following earthquake.
2004: Support to Operation Sumatra Assist I after Boxing Day tsunami.
2005: Support to Operation Sumatra Assist II.
2007: Delivery of disaster relief for Operation PNG Assist following Cyclone Yasi and heavy flooding.
2008: Rapid deployment of Defence personnel into East Timor to provide support for government.
2011: Airlift support to Queensland Floods, Cyclone Yasi and Christchurch Earthquake.
2013: Search-and-rescue coordination for French solo yachtman Alain Delord and fuel-efficient engines, a longer fuselage that could carry more cargo and advanced avionics for navigation and management of systems.

Member's from Air Force and the Ambulance Service NSW work together to unload Bali blast victims from a C-130J.

Main image: C-130J Hercules in a formation flight over RAAF Base Richmond to mark the aircraft’s 20th anniversary.

Photo: CPL Craig Barrett
IN BRIEF

Nominate now

NOMINATIONS are being sought for consideration in the military division of the 2020 Queen’s Birthday Honours List. Both ADF and APS personnel who have demonstrated significant personal dedication, distinguished command or leadership, outstanding application of skill or meritorious service resulting in long-lasting benefits to Defence can be recognised. Supervisors should complete form AD104 – Nominations for Half Yearly Honours, as well as a narrative and synopsis document, must be submitted to DHA Noms&Decs@defence.gov.au before October 4. More information can be found in chapter five of the Defence Honours and Awards Manual or DEFGRAM 406/2019.

Trial to step out

THE Stepping Out Attention Reset (SOAR) program is currently being trialled for ADF personnel transitioning to civilian life. The trial aims to increase the wellbeing of participants by re-calibrating their attention and threat detection system from the enhanced re-calibrating their attention and threat detection system from the enhanced detection system from the enhanced

Veteran Health Checks

STAYING on top of our health can be a challenge. To support veterans after transition from the ADF to civilian life, there are One-off Veteran Health Checks available for all former members of both the permanent and reserve forces. They are accessible at any time and veterans can access these even if they are not a DVA client, using their Medicare card. Additionally, members that leave the ADF from July 1 can access, with a DVA Veteran Health Check every year for five years after transition. For more information about the Veteran Health Check can be found at www.at-ease.dva.gov.au/veteran-health-check

Fuel Symposium

THE annual Defence Fuel Symposium will be held at Adams Hall, ADFA, Canberra, on October 31. Keynote speakers and former RAAF and Qantas pilot, Robert O’Hargan, who was credited with saving the lives of more than 460 passengers in November 2010 when one of his engines on the Qantas A380 he was flying exploded, will present on crisis management, leadership, problem solving and teamwork. Fuel Industry representatives and international guests will also be attending the symposium. The event is an ideal opportunity to hear thought-provoking presentations, share information and network with peers. Interested parties can register at ds2019.eventbrite.com.au
For further information contact Fuel Services Branch on 02 9933 3868 or fuel.symposium@defence.gov.au

Lighting Symposium

The lighting Symposium will be held at the Canberra Theatre, on October 28. Keynote speakers will present on the latest in lighting technology and applications. Participants will also have the opportunity to network with peers. For more information contact Lighting Services Branch on 02 9933 3819 or lighting.symposium@defence.gov.au

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Technically speaking

A technical career in the RAAF has been life-changing for one corporal, writes FLTLT Tracey Bowman.

“Exercise Mobility Guardian is a fantastic opportunity to work with our Airmen from other countries and personnel deployed to the exercise and from their counterparts from other militaries. “A technical job in the RAAF would not only allow me to pursue my interest in aviation and automotive fields, it would also allow me to defend my country while contributing towards operations to help other countries that are less fortunate than Australia,” he said.

“I joined as an aircraft technician, we are mechanics for the aircraft and specialise in maintenance and sustainment of aircraft.”

CPL Kanowski said his RAAF aircraft technician career has given him many unique experiences, which he would not have experienced as a civilian.

“I’ve participated in four major military exercises and deployed to the Middle East to test and further develop my skills,” he said.

CPL Kanowski has fixed Caribou aircraft in Townsville, maintained NH-90s in Nowra, instructed on Super Hornet aircraft in Ipswich.

“One of the most memorable experiences I’ve had was working on the Caribou aircraft at 38SQN,” he said.

“Our aircraft got bogged during a training mission at Papua New Guinea and we had to use rope and winch from a nearby village to pull the aircraft free from the soft ground.

“Later on that trip the aircraft had a component failure. While we waited for our parts to arrive we had the opportunity to explore the region, make friends with the locals and truly appreciate the food and culture.

“After we fixed the aircraft, I got to see some of the most breathtaking landscapes from the window of the aircraft as we departed. It was truly a fantastic experience.”

CPL Kanowski said his Townsville posting has been life-changing.

“Joining the RAAF has also allowed me to meet my beautiful wife Renauc, if it wasn’t for my posting to Townsville I wouldn’t have met her,” he said.

“We now have three incredible children and I feel truly blessed every day.

“Another thing I love about being in theADF is the friendly Defence community.

“I live in a military village at Kapooka and the members in our street are like a second family.

“We have dinners together, care for each other’s kids, talk and unwind while spending time with our honourary family members.”

Guarding the skies

FLTLT Clarice Hurren

RAAF dispatched its two largest aircraft to the United States for Exercise Mobility Guardian.

Exercise Mobility Guardian is conducted by the US Air Force to rehearse key air mobility roles.

It includes air-to-air refuelling from RAAF’s KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport aircraft, aerial delivery of cargo to drop zones by the C-17A Globemaster III and aeromedical evacuation training.

Most of the 100 Australian personnel deployed to the exercise are from RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland, who will join more than 26 other nations and 60 aircraft.

The Australian element is led by CO 33SQN, WGCDR Sarah Stalker.

She said RAAF medical, security, intelligence, aircrew, maintenance and other support personnel will be working closely with and learning from their counterparts from other militaries.

“Exercise Mobility Guardian will involve participants from the US, New Zealand, UK and Canada, just to name a few,” WGCDR Stalker said.

“Our role is to work with these international partners to deliver a first-stage response to emergency scenarios, providing aeromedical evacuation support, personnel recovery and refuelling to other aircraft involved.

“Air mobility is a critical part of how a modern defence force maintains its logistical links and responds during real-world humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions.”

Working alongside RAAF aircraft are USAF’s C-5M Galaxy transport, KC-135 and KC-10 tankers, and the Royal Air Force’s A400M Atlas turboprop.

“Exercise Mobility Guardian allows us to train with the best and leverage off invaluable opportunities developed by USAF’s Air Mobility Command,” WGCDR Stalker said.

S

ERVING in the same unit as his grandfather more than 60 years ago has been a privilege for CPL Timothy Kanowski.

With nearly 13 years of technical experience under his belt, CPL Kanowski became an instructor at the RAAF School of Technical Training in 2018.

“I was honoured to be chosen for this teaching role, not only because it was good recognition of my technical expertise, but also because my grandfather served here as an avionics instructor in the 1950s,” CPL Kanowski said.

CPL Kanowski joined in 2005 after his friend CPL Aaron Somerville convinced him to look into RAAF technical career options.

“A technical job in the RAAF would not only allow me to pursue my interest in aviation and automotive fields, it would also allow me to defend my country while contributing towards operations to help other countries that are less fortunate than Australia,” he said.

“I joined as an aircraft technician, we are mechanics for the aircraft and specialise in maintenance and sustainment of aircraft.”

CPL Kanowski said his RAAF aircraft technician career has given him many unique experiences, which he would not have experienced as a civilian.

“I’ve participated in four major military exercises and deployed to the Middle East to test and further develop my skills,” he said.

CPL Kanowski has fixed Caribou aircraft in Townsville, maintained NH-90s in Nowra and worked with Super Hornet aircraft in Ipswich.

“One of the most memorable experiences I’ve had was working on the Caribou aircraft at 38SQN,” he said.

“Our aircraft got bogged during a training mission at Papua New Guinea and we had to use rope and winch from a nearby village to pull the aircraft free from the soft ground.

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“I live in a military village at Kapooka and the members in our street are like a second family.

“We have dinners together, care for each other’s kids, talk and unwind while spending time with our honorary family members.”
AAF’s No. 4 Squadron has completed a rare formation flypast of the unit’s four modified Pilatus PC-9/A aircraft in the New South Wales Hunter Region ahead of their retirement.

The aircraft headed north to the town of Bulahdelah before turning south along the coast. They passed significant local landmarks, including the Port Stephens Lighthouse and Nobbys Head, before returning to RAAF Base Williamtown.

The aircraft are scheduled for retirement in October, with the squadron expecting the new PC-21 aircraft in early 2020. XO 4SQN SQNLDR P said the Forward Air Control Variant of the PC-9/A has been invaluable in a joint ground-and-air unit.

“The crews operate them and interact closely and routinely with combat controllers, the Commando Regiment, the Combat Survival Training School, Force Command or the Special Air Service Regiment, of the most throughout integrated training,” SQNLDR P said.

“We are exceptionally fond of our PC-9/A (F); they are rugged, agile, great access to noise-sensitive or combined airspace; are suitable for fast jets, and they can get the job done supporting training objectives for the supporting units that actually do and can do anything today due to its low speed and low working altitude ability.

“The aircraft have significant endurance such that joint terminal attack controllers (JAC) students can repeat training serials to meet the standard, the aircraft were modified with grey paint, infrared laser pointers for night target marking, additional radios for the complex air-ground environment, advanced laser pointers for night target marking, digital close air support communications systems, night-vision equipment, enhanced ground situational awareness tools.

“The aircraft have been used to train ADF JTACs who coordinate air support to troops on the ground, and its fixed-wing forward air controller (airborne) capability. It is the only one accredited by the US Department of Defense.

ADF JTACs and combat controllers that were trained or maintained proficiency with PC-9/A (F) flying overhead have a soft spot for these aircraft, it contributed significantly to building the skills they were able to employ in combat in Afghanistan.

Under Defence’s Project AIR 5428, Air Force will receive a new pilot training system underpinned by the PC-21 aircraft – 4SQN will receive four of the 49 new PC-21s, which will provide an updated operational training capability.

The first aircraft will be decommissioned this month and transferred to Townsville Aviation Heritage Centre, with a second aircraft to be transferred to Fighter World at RAAF Base Williamtown.
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†Negotiated Smartleasing buying power discount on chosen vehicle may vary.
Inspiring a joint force edge

It was all about pushing the boundaries of fifth-generation tech at the recent EDGY event, Samara Kitchener reports.

EDGY Air Force was on show earlier this month, inspiring airmen and airwomen to pursue great ideas. Showcasing their own great idea was SGT William Gill and LACs Chad Bray and Md Jewel.

“Over two years, 200+ flying hours, and seven operations, we have brought the security forces in line with a fifth-generation Air Force,” SGT Gill said.

On deployment in Afghanistan, SGT Gill seized the opportunity to use organic unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to improve situational awareness and decision-making capability for security forces.

SGT Gill worked with LAC David O’Toole to develop the concept, trials and operating procedures for a small unmanned aircraft system to be used in complex environments like an active airfield.

With the backing of their commanding officer, development of the capability was funded by grants from CDR CSG, ACAUST and Plan Jericho, including the purchase of military grade quadcopters.

“For me, briefing ACAUST was the most nerve-wracking and exhilarating moment. After all the hard work it felt pretty awesome being endorsed at that level,” SGT Gill said.

“It felt really good being there as part of the EDGY Air Force program to champion others to back themselves and their ideas. “Networking is key to getting a project from ground up through to integration. Many people have helped me along the way and now I want to help others,” CPL Christopher Walsh and a group of technical trade graduates came to check out the Wagga EDGY activation and said it was “striking and eye opening”. “The event gave everyone a new encouraging perspective and an avenue to voice their ideas. After attending, the whole office was overflowing with fifth-generation ideas based on new-age technology,” he said.

SGT Gill had the following advice for airmen and airwomen, such as CPL Walsh:

- Surround yourself with the right people
- Work away at what you are passionate about
- Reach out to the EDGY Air Force and Plan Jericho teams
- Be professional and have a positive mindset
- Keep pushing against the roadblocks.

If you want to turn your idea into a joint force edge, submit your idea to plan.jericho@defence.gov.au or visit www.airforce.gov.au/EDGY

The next EDGY Air Force Ignite will be held at East Sale in October.

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Flying off into the sunset

Lessons in leadership

FLGOFF Malia Naupoto

Air Force reserve officers gathered at HMAS Harman in Canberra last month for the International Junior Officer Leadership Development Course (IOLD), designed to enhance leadership capability, enrich international ties and strengthen military coalition understanding.

Australia hosted 60 junior officers from Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States and its own ranks. During a week of facilitated discussions and presentations, participants examined leadership concepts and topics including moral courage, strategic influences and leadership through adversity.

IOLD Project Director WGCDR Jennifer Howell was proud to see the collaboration between NATO countries and partner nations.

“IOLD was a pivotal opportunity to promote a broader understanding of differing military doctrine and foster esprit de corps between nations to strengthen unity as a coalition force,” she said.

Director General Reserves – Air Force AIRCDRE Bob Rodgers said it was “imperative that our junior reserve officers are at the forefront of international engagement with our allied nations and are able to build long-term relationships”.

FLTLT Jodie Kilford, of 33SQN, said a wreath laying at the War Memorial was the highlight from a week of forging strong international ties and expanding the understanding of Australia’s military culture.

She said IOLD was a “culturally enriching and rewarding experience”.

Coaching you through your next steps

As you think about your career beyond the ADF, skilled transition coaches are available to assist you at ADF Transition Centres.

Coaches can help you understand your skills and interests, and assist you to access a range of services and programs to help you achieve your post-transition goals.

Coaches are available before and during your transition, as well as up to 12 months after you leave the ADF.

Want more information?

DEPLOYED as an aircraft technician working with KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport aircraft in the Middle East, CPL Scott Hughes claims his team, at times, resembles a Formula One pit crew. He said when an aircraft returns from a mission, it was critical for his team to work quickly and effectively to ensure the aircraft was ready for its next mission.

“When the jet arrives back from task, my team springs into action,” CPL Hughes said. “We live and work in small teams, everyone knows their job, trusts one another and knows what needs to be done.”

His crew makes sure the KC-30A aircraft is on station, in the skies over Iraq, providing vital air-to-air refuelling capability for coalition partners.

“As Air Force maintainers, we strive for 100 per cent mission readiness and that is what we have achieved so far,” CPL Hughes said. The Middle East summer poses unique challenges for the maintenance teams with temperatures sometimes soaring above 50 degrees on the flightline.

“He said when an aircraft returns from a mission, it was critical for his team to work quickly and effectively to ensure the aircraft was ready for its next mission.”

“Imagine you are baking a cake in the oven, you open the door and are hit with a rush of hot air – that is what it’s like working here,” CPL Hughes said. Strong family ties to the military influenced CPL Hughes’ decision to join the ADF.

His father served in the Navy and both his grandfather and uncle were in the Army. CPL Hughes originally joined Air Force as an airfield defence guard, but said it wasn’t long before he was pursuing a role that required a more technical skillset.

“I quickly realised that I wanted to be directly involved in air operations,” he said. CPL Hughes re-trained at the RAAF School of Technical Training in Wagga Wagga. He is currently posted to 33SQN as part of Operation Okra.

Aircraft Technician CPL Scott Hughes is deployed to the Middle East as part of Operation Okra. Photo: SGT Kirk Peacock.

DEPARTURE LOUNGE

Who’s leaving after 20+ years

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Inspiring climb to the top

FLTLT Bel Scott

ON a mission to inspire other stroke survivors, FLTLT Nathan Nguyen climbed five mountains in Canberra during National Stroke Week from September 2 to 8 to raise awareness for brain injury and stroke in young adults.

Covering an ambitious 15.4km over six days, the Air Force armament engineer conquered each mountain with the support and care of his wife Kerrie, family, Air Force mates and community support groups such as Soldier On.

FLTLT Nguyen suffered a stroke at the age of 29 from a workplace accident, which left him paralysed on his left side.

“I was in a coma post-accident; Kerrie was told that I’d be lucky to walk again and regain any feeling back in the left-hand side of my body,” FLTLT Nguyen said.

“I had a number of surgeries, which essentially saved my life but unfortunately couldn’t reverse any of the damage.”

“Determined to prove the experts wrong, I went on to spend months at a rehabilitation hospital and relevant how to walk.”

“I’m using this life-changing experience to shift the public perception of a stroke.”

About 60,000 Australians suffer a stroke each year, with nearly one third being of working age.

“Anyone, regardless of their fitness and age, has the potential to have a stroke,” FLTLT Nguyen said.

“During National Stroke Week, I wanted to ramp up the awareness efforts by challenging myself to mountain climbing – showing other young stroke survivors my journey and inspiring them not to quit.”

“It was an extremely hard week but I’m proud of how far I’ve come and will continue to push myself each day on my road to recovery.”

FLTLT Nguyen’s wife and full-time carer, Kerrie, had no doubt he would reach every summit. “Nathan has always had a strong and determined spirit, so I knew whatever goal he set his mind to, it would be achieved,” she said.

“We started to document his recovery journey via our Instagram account @afterstroke; it has been remarkable to reflect on how far Nathan has come, and connect with other stroke survivors and their families.”

“We are so grateful for the ongoing support since Nathan’s injury. Both his previous and current units have been highly supportive during his recovery, assisting in whatever way they can.”

To donate visit afterstroke.org

See footage at: video.defence.gov.au/play/63168
FLTLT Adam Cross, of No. 1 Squadron, takes part in a game with students from the Ang Hui Yang School during Exercise Thai Boomerang.

Above: WOFF Nicola O’Brien, front left, and WGCDR David Taplin, front right, display the Australian Red Cross Blood Service phone app during the Defence Blood Challenge at RAAF Base Amberley.

FLGOFF Katherine Mitchell, of No. 35 Squadron, chats with Defence Work Experience Program participant Lucy Capstick about the C-27J Spartan and life in the Air Force.

LACW Samantha Morley, left, LS Jonathan Rendell and WO2 Matthew Rhodes at the Sir Stamford Hotel, Sydney, to promote the forthcoming Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo performances in Australia.

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FLGOFF Katherine Mitchell, of No. 35 Squadron, chats with Defence Work Experience Program participant Lucy Capstick about the C-27J Spartan and life in the Air Force.

Photo: CPL Jesse Kote

LACW Samantha Morley, left, LS Jonathan Rendell and WO2 Matthew Rhodes at the Sir Stamford Hotel, Sydney, to promote the forthcoming Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo performances in Australia.

Photo: AB Benjamin Ricketts

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Photo: CPL Jesse Kote

LACW Samantha Morley, left, LS Jonathan Rendell and WO2 Matthew Rhodes at the Sir Stamford Hotel, Sydney, to promote the forthcoming Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo performances in Australia.

Photo: AB Benjamin Ricketts
Aiming for the national title

LS Craig Walton

SOFTBALL proved tough when the ADF women’s team took on some of Australia’s best this month in the Qld state tournament. ADF members from across Australia competed for the third consecutive year in the event, playing eight games over three days.

“Tournament was approved by the Air Force with constant improvement they hope to keep on top of their rivals across the ditch in New Zealand. I can do that for the women who start along the way was important, so hopefully the women who start out through Defence.”

The ADF women’s softball team is all smiles as they prepare for the national titles in December.

FLGOFF Jayden Hasemann, left, and cadets Josh Brewster and Stuart Morrow race their drones at the Air Force Drone Racing Tournament at RAAF Base Richmond.

Flying high in Richmond sky

CPL Veronica O’Hara

ALL the excitement of a motor sport like Red Bull air racing, yet accessible to anyone – according to PLTOFF Nicholas Eberl, that’s the appeal of racing drones.

On his first posting, he decided to start an Air Force team. “I thought it was a really good opportunity for STEM engagement and a sport that anyone in Air Force could enjoy,” PLTOFF Eberl said.

AFDRA have loan kits available for new members to allow them to experience the sport before committing to buying their own equipment. AFDRA will be at the RAAF Base Richmond Family Day on September 22 and the Edinburgh Air Show from November 8 to 10.

Air Force personnel can join AFDRA by emailing afdr.team@defence.gov.au.

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I always strive to play at the highest level, and for me to have someone to look up to and help me along the way was important.

– SGT Tracey Freeman

FLGOFF Jake Dell-O’Sullivan, PLTOFF Eberl and FSgt Justin Galbraith qualified to represent Air Force at the Australian Drone Nationals in Canberra during October 18-20, with AAFC member CPL Josh Brewster winning the competition overall.

“People walking by came over to watch. In fact, a couple of them bought drones and joined AFDRA,” FSgt Galbraith said. “AFDRA president FLGOFF Dell-O’Sullivan started flying RC aircraft as a teenager, then progressed to developing autonomous UAVs for the Medical Express UAV Challenge at university.

On his first posting, he decided to start an Air Force team. “I thought it was a really good opportunity for STEM engagement and a sport that anyone in Air Force could enjoy,” FLGOFF Dell-O’Sullivan said.

“We also use it to promote positive drone awareness to the public and discuss the future applications of such technology.”

One month after AFDRA was approved by the Air Force Sports Council in September 2018, AFDRA competed in the inaugural Military International Drone Racing Tournament held at Victoria Barracks, Sydney.

Air Force placed fourth after three days of competitions from Army, Defence Industry, Army Cadets, New Zealand, UK, Thailand, and the current Australian and World Champion, Thomas Birnatta.

PLTOFF Eberl said one of the great things about building racing drones is it covers all aspects of STEM.

“There’s the material science of using carbon fibre and experimenting with different 3D-printed materials – which we design ourselves in order to protect the electronics – but also the aeronautical side, with propeller design and overall shape to make it as aerodynamic and quick as possible,” PLTOFF Eberl said.

AFDRA have loan kits available for new members to allow them to experience the sport before committing to buying their own equipment. AFDRA will be at the RAAF Base Richmond Family Day on September 22 and the Edinburgh Air Show from November 8 to 10.

Air Force personnel can join AFDRA by emailing afdr.team@defence.gov.au.

FLGOFF Jayden Hasemann, left, and cadets Josh Brewster and Stuart Morrow race their drones at the Air Force Drone Racing Tournament at RAAF Base Richmond.

Photo: CPL Casey Forster
Training to win

LEUT Kiz Welling-Burtenshaw

THE ADFRU men’s team cruised into the semi-finals of the quadrennial International Defence Rugby Competition in Japan after winning their first game by forfeit.

Head coach WO Dave Carter said he was confident in his side and their preparation, and hoped to bring the title home this year.

“We’re here to win it, one game at a time,” WO Carter said.

“The strength and conditioning team provided a training plan to the squad three months ago with measurable goals and targets to reach before the camp commenced.

“Our first game was against the Tongan Defence Force, who unfortunately didn’t arrive in time. After that, we’re up against the Kiwis.

“Looking at the draw I expect to play Fiji and then the UK in the final. It’s a big goal.”

Part of the development of the team since 2015 was the recruitment and harnessing of new talent. WO Carter made mention of AC Logan Morley.

“AC Morley is a newcomer to the engine room up front, providing mobility with strong carries and support in attack,” WO Carter said.

“He has very good vision in defence, often making big hits with great line speed and technically sound tackles.”

Although a great development opportunity for both new and experienced players, the management group worked to ensure they all stayed grounded, and didn’t take the experience for granted.

“A lot of hard work has been put in by the players over many years, so to be able to play in Japan during a World Cup year is pretty special,” WO Carter said.

“This year the competition boasts nine other teams, each with strengths and weaknesses the ADFRU hopes to exploit.”

WO Carter said the UK Combined Forces and reigning champions Fiji would be their biggest challengers.

“The UK will be a big team across every position, with a majority of the team playing in professional competitions in the UK,” he said.

“They were very competitive as individual services, so combining the three and the Marines will give them depth in all positions. “Defending champions Fiji have been together as a squad for a long time, so they will bring speed and the Fijian flair to this tournament once again.

“Our attack will be based around containment at all costs, and I believe we have the right players to attack opportunities as they present.”

Follow ADFRU progress at mod.go.jp/br/public/olympic/krfn/index.html

Training to win

The ADFRU men’s team at a field session in preparation for the International Defence Rugby Competition, Japan.

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Air Force shows its skills at tournament

FLGOFF Jake Del-O'Sullivan, L/Cpl Yuchen Huang, Jeromy Cox, Zihao Wang and PLTOFF Nicholas Eberl with their drones and project models at the Air Force Drone Racing Tournament held at RAAF Base Richmond.

Photo: CPL Casey Forster