

# SADFO Update

**AIR FORCE**

Issue 1 – Jan/Mar 19

## Welcome

Welcome to the first Senior Australian Defence Force Officer (SADFO) Update for 2019. For those unfamiliar with my updates, they are provided to give community members an update on activities, events, exercises and milestones involving Williamtown units and their personnel - military, civilian and contractors.

### **Base Visits**

No. 26SQN (WLM Airbase Operations Squadron (AOS)) have already started the year coordinating a number of base visits.

### Miss Georgie U'Brien

A chance introduction at last year's Invictus Games between AVM Roberton, DSC, AM Air Commander Australia (ACAUST) and a nine-year old girl from Dungog, passionate about an Air Force flying career, resulted in a visit to the base by the young girl and her immediate family on 21 Jan 19. SQNLDR Alesha Cantelo XO 3CRU, the U'Brien family visited the Military Working Dog and Fire Section and the



flightline and an opportunity to talk with ACAUST who was visiting the base on that day.

### NSW Police Training

On 07 Feb 19, the base provided a secure training environment for 49 NSW police officers (NSWP) and a fleet of 15 NSW Police highway patrol (HWP) vehicles. The training day, undertaken by NSWP HWP stationed in the Hunter region offered both practical and theoretical training for the NSW police officers.

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At the completion of their training, the group were escorted to the F35 precinct for a once in a lifetime photograph.

## **Exercises and Operations**

### Air Warfare Instructor Course in 2019 (AWIC19)

Over the period 11 - 29 Mar 19, there will be a significant increase in flying activities with the Air Force conducting the second biennial Air Warfare Instructor Course, a six month course integrating warfighting functions across a range of specialisations. Exercise DIAMOND SHIELD, will operate RAAF and foreign force aircraft from RAAF Base Williamtown, RAAF Base Amberley and Coffs Harbour Airport. An update will be provided next month.

### Australian International Airshow 2019 (AIA19)

The ADF participated in the AIA19 held at Avalon, Victoria over the period 26 Feb – 03 Mar 19. Many base personnel attended the AIA Aerospace and Defence Expo 2019 - a week long trade exhibition showcasing aerospace industry and military aviation (26 Feb - 01 Mar 19), followed by the Avalon 2019 public airshow on the weekend of 01 - 03 Mar 19.

RAAF WLM squadrons and units have already been involved in major exercises in Australia and overseas as detailed in the following pages.

### **SURVEILLANCE & RESPONSE GROUP (SRG)**

The FEG continues to sustain and enhance multi-domain intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, maritime strike, as well maintain control of air and airspace management capabilities across the spectrum of operations in support of Australia's national interests. To maintain this high level of readiness – SRG assets and personnel have already been engaged or are in preparation for a range of exercise commitments including RED FLAG, COPE NORTH, OCEAN EXPLORER, SHIELD MAIDEN, INDO PACIFIC ENDEAVOUR, TALISMAN SABRE and the DIAMOND series exercises.

### **No. 2 Squadron (2SQN) - Operation OKRA**

2SQN's fourteenth rotation as part of Operation OKRA flew its last mission in the Middle East Region in mid February. Rotation 14 deployed in Oct 18 and supported the Advanced Tactical Leadership Course, an air combat training program held by the United Arab Emirates Air Force. After providing air battle management as part the Large Force Employment missions, the crew had a short transition period to prepare for their Operation OKRA tasking. The crew, half of whom were deploying with Wedgetail for the first time, then quickly moved into the OKRA tasking, executing 13-hour missions over Iraq. The Wedgetail crew were responsible for controlling coalition aircraft operating over Syria and much of Iraq. The Wedgetail provided a crucial communication link between airborne assets and the Combined Air and Space Operations Centre.

The small detachment of 2SQN personnel worked closely with other Command and Control agencies in the Area of Operations, maintaining the unit's strong reputation in the coalition, and the efforts of the maintenance personnel helped achieve a serviceability rate of 94%.



Above: A 2SQN E-7A Wedgetail and a 10SQN AP-3C (Electronic Warfare) Orion aircraft on the tarmac as part of Exercise Red Flag 19-1, Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, USA.

### Exercise RED FLAG

2SQN deployed 44 personnel to Las Vegas in January for the annual Red Flag – Nellis training event. The four week exercise is the most complex and challenging air combat training event in the world, consisting of deployed units from the United States Air Force, United States Navy, and Royal Air Force with approximately 370 personnel from the RAAF.

## COMBAT SUPPORT GROUP (CSG)

### **No. 1 Combat Communications Squadron (1CCS)**



1CCS marks 20 years of continuous operational service this year starting with their commitment to East Timor on 20 Sep 99. Since then, 1CCS (then known as the Air Transportable Telecommunications Unit) has had an enduring presence supporting operations both domestically and across the globe. 1CCS has deployed 24 members to Guam on Exercise COPE

NORTH 19 in support of multiple ADF elements in a coalition setting.

Additionally, 1CCS personnel have also deployed locally in support of No. 1 & No. 6 SQN's on Exercise DIAMOND SHIELD and will shortly go on to provide support to other activities including Exercises DIAMOND STORM, LIGHTNING HAMMER, TALISMAN SABER and RED FLAG ALASKA. In addition to these important tasks, 1CCS continues to provide invaluable support to its ongoing Middle East commitments.



Above: 1CCS WLM FLT with Commanding Officer WGCDR Daniel McManus from RAAF Base Amberley.

### **No. 381 Squadron (381SQN)**

381 SQN began 2019 Exercise LITTLE OWL 19 incorporated the newly updated Expeditionary Skills Course and Evacuation Handling Centre training. The unit's ability to effectively conduct a multi-national EHC will be put to the test during Exercise COPE NORTH 19 when it will conduct humanitarian aid disaster relief planning and execution with US and Japanese counterparts.



Left: 381SQN personnel conducting ESC in the field at RAAF Williamtown.

## **AIR COMBAT GROUP (ACG)**

From 21 Jan 19, two F-35A aircraft began flying operations out of Williamtown. The two aircraft will begin a phase of operations designed to verify and validate the jets capabilities during 2019 - 2020 in the lead-up to the declaration of the Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in 2020. At the end of 2019, ACG expect to have taken delivery of up to eight aircraft. In late Feb 19, local residents and Base personnel could catch a glimpse of Air Force fighter aircraft F/A-18A Classic Hornets, Hawk Lead-In Fighter and our new F-35A Joint Strike Fighters conducted practice displays over the base precinct in preparation for the AIA19. The first month of flying for 3SQN has been focused on the local area, with aircrew, maintenance teams and Defence contractor partners working proactively together to shape the evolution of F-35A operations. 3SQN will also undertake the second ferry of F-35A aircraft from the United States to RAAF Base Williamtown, due for arrival early Apr 19.

### **No. 77 Squadron (77SQN)**

77SQN has proven itself a worthy adversary during Exercise RED FLAG at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, USA. Exercise Red Flag is based around realistic training scenarios for combat aircrew including engagement by air and ground threats, the possibility of being in a simulated shoot down and run-throughs of personnel recovery procedures including escape and evasion. The training is aimed at aircrew who have limited combat experience, either from exercises or operations, and gives them the opportunity to hone their skills in a high-tempo hostile battlespace.

### **No. 4 Squadron (4SQN)**

4SQN will soon be at the forefront of the international Joint Terminal Attack Control (JTAC) community with the almost completed JTAC Dome Simulator as part of Project: Land 17. This state of the art seven metre, 270 degree field-of-view dome system fully immerses the JTAC student within a 3D real-time virtual battlefield.



### **No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit (2OCU)**

For 2OCU, the completion of Ex HIGH SIERRA 18-2 saw the conclusion of 2OCU Operational Conversion (OPCON) Course which graduated eight new F/A18 Classic Hornet fighter pilots. These pilots have since been posted throughout ACG with four members posting to 75SQN, three members to 77SQN and one member to 1SQN. This year, 2019 marks the final year of 2OCU Classic Hornet (CH) operations.

To commemorate the final year of 2OCU flying the CH, specifically the final year instructing the OPCON Course and the FA18 CH component of the AWI Course, dual seat aircraft #116 returned to Williamtown bearing specially designed paint work. In early 2021, the next group of pilots to graduate from 2OCU as fighter pilots will do so on the F-35A Joint Strike Fighter. The F/A18B dual seat aircraft are symbolic to 2OCU as the main asset type used in training and instructing F/A18 pilots. Aircraft #116 returned to 2OCU on 10 Jan 19 after a very public, low level flight down the NSW coastline showing off its new stripes.



**Left: The distinctive paintwork design features black on orange tiger stripes along the dorsal spine of the aircraft and on the inside of the vertical fins. The outside of the fins feature the 2OCU tiger head on a black background.**

## **CAPABILITY ACQUISITION & SUSTAINMENT GROUP (CASG)**

### **Tactical Fighter Systems Program Office (TFSP0)**

TFSP0 has reached a few major milestones already in early 2019, including the efforts by personnel culminating in the first two Classic Hornets having reached Canada for sale, and the final Hawk aircraft undergoing Lead-In Fighter Capability Assurance Program (LIFCAP) modification.

### **Classic Hornet Sale to Canada**

As part of the withdrawal from service of the F/A-18 A/B CH capability, up to 25 aircraft will be sold to Canada along with spares and support equipment. The first two of these aircraft were flown to Canadian



Forces Base Cold Lake on 16 Feb 19 by 77SQN, following their participation in Exercise Red Flag 19. TFSP0 and Defence Industry provided the engineering and logistic support to enable the reconfiguration and sanitisation works to be completed by 77SQN at Cold Lake. At the completion of these works, A21-053 and A21-055 will be formally transferred to the Government of Canada.

**Above: The first of two RAAF F/A-18A's arrive at Canada's Aerospace Engineering Test Establishment – Canadian Flight Test Centre (AETE – CFTC) at 4 Wing Cold Lake, Alberta, on 16 Feb 19. (Cold Lake Imagery/Canada)**

### **Lead-In Fighter Capability Assurance Program (LIFCAP) Completion**

Lead-In Fighter Capability Assurance Program (LIFCAP) is nearing closure with the 33<sup>rd</sup> and final aircraft undergoing modification. LIFCAP involves upgrading the RAAF's Lead-In Fighter Training System (LIFTS) to assure the required quality and quantity of qualified aircrew are available to support the Air Force's transition to the next generation of fighter systems. The program is a collaborative effort between Defence and Industry Partners to ensure that LIFTS is functionally suited to employ new generation air power capability.

## **DEFENCE PEOPLE GROUP**

### **Defence Community Organisation (DCO)**

The DCO Welcome to Williamstown Expo and Family Day was held on Sun 24 Feb 19 at the Murrook Culture Centre, enabling current serving ADF members posted in the Hunter region and their recognised dependants, to meet with local community and Defence service providers and engage with other Defence families.

### **Presentation and Awards**

On behalf of all Commanders, I wish to acknowledge the outstanding service contributions and achievements of a number of Williamstown based personnel and congratulate the Australia Day 2019 Honour recipients.

## Community News

### 26SQN (WLM AOS) Emergency First Responders

26SQN (WLM AOS), the start to their year saw them attending three emergency situations with our personnel being first responders.

On 21 Jan 19 a fatal two car crash on Medowie Road just north of the main gate saw our RAAF Police and Fire section personnel attend the scene and offer assistance to affected persons before civilian emergency agencies attended. In February, the Base Airfield Emergency Procedures were activated with two civilian aircraft emergencies. On 1 Feb 19, our Fire Section personnel were first responders to a Virgin Australia Boeing 737 aircraft diverted to Newcastle with a declared emergency following a fire indicator warning in the forward cargo hold. Fortunately, the aircraft landed safely and passengers transported to Sydney by road. Two weeks later, a FlyPelican Fokker 100, operated by Alliance Airways encountered a hydraulic system failure which resulted in a spill on the runway and once again RAAF Fire Section attended before HAZMAT teams were called in.

As a military (not joint user) airfield, all operations on and around the runway are the responsibility of RAAF Base Williamtown from military air traffic control, to first responders for any airfield emergency.

### RAAF Williamtown Anniversary

On 15 Feb 19, the base celebrated a significant milestone - its 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of formation. Our base has a significant and long-standing history and been a major contributor to the Defence of Australia over the years and now with its training and operational activities. The importance and contribution of this base and the combined Force Element Groups will continue and grow into the future given the platforms and capabilities that reside here and will only continue to evolve into a 5<sup>th</sup> generation Air Force. For more historical (and current) information on RAAF Base Williamtown refer to the Welcome to Williamtown Annual Handbook 2019 at [www.raafapublications.org.au/WLM-2019](http://www.raafapublications.org.au/WLM-2019).

### Base Supports *Friends with Dignity*

Late last year, following a number of demolition projects undertaken on RAAF Base Williamtown, CPB Contractors and the Department of Defence coordinated a massive donation effort of furniture to the charity *Friends with Dignity*. Over 150 single bed ensembles, mirrors, chairs, book cabinets, coffee tables, televisions, dryers, washing machines and ironing boards were donated which would have otherwise been sent to landfill.

### 2OCU Fund-Raising in Full Swing

On 19 Oct 18, 2OCU held an annual Charity Golf Day at Tanilba Bay Golf Club raising over \$3000 for the Organisation CANTEEN with the generosity and support of local businesses around Newcastle, the Hunter and Sydney. The unit's fundraising efforts took 2OCU's total contribution to over \$10,000 since the unit began supporting Canteen in 2016. 2OCU has had a long standing connection with Canteen as it is 2OCU's primary charity although they do support several others including Soldier On, White Ribbon, Movember, Decembeard (which raised approximately \$7000) and Suicide Prevention Australia.

## Redevelopment News

### JSF Precinct Update

Work is still progressing on the new 3SQN and 77SQN buildings and aircraft shelters with final fit-out being conducted and defects being reworked. It is expected these facilities will be handed over in early 2019.

### Williamtown Stage 2 Update

The Flexible Office Accommodation (FOA) building is progressing well with the internal fit progressing on several floors. The first new occupants of the FOA are not expected to commence their move until after Sep 19. The new base auditorium is also progressing well and will be able to support briefings for up to 250 personnel. Additionally, the new commercial precinct, which will house AAFCANS, banks, the barber and hairdresser, is moving along rapidly and is expected to be ready for fit-out in early 2019.

## Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Investigation and Management Program

Defence has completed the detailed environmental investigation to better understand the nature and extent of PFAS on and in the vicinity of RAAF Base Williamtown. All findings of the investigation, including detailed reports and factsheets are available for download from the RAAF Base Williamtown PFAS Investigation website at:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/pfas/Williamtown/publications.asp>

The outcomes from the investigation are being used to develop a PFAS Management Area Plan (PMAP) for the Williamtown Management Area. The PMAP will outline activities that Defence will undertake to manage and reduce the risks of PFAS exposure for the Williamtown and surrounding community. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/docs/Williamtown/FactSheets/201810WilliamtownPMAPFactsheet.pdf>

### Remediation and Management Works

Defence is continuing to remediate PFAS source areas at RAAF Base Williamtown. The aim of these remediation works is to remove PFAS from the environment and reduce the potential for PFAS to migrate off site.

In Nov 18, work was undertaken to excavate PFAS contaminated soil from the former fire training area; early results of sampling of the groundwater under the former fire training area shows PFAS levels have reduced, this is to be expected given the works in the area. It is too early to assess how the works have affected off base contamination.

Defence's environmental consultant will carry out sampling of the broader area under the Ongoing Monitoring Plan later in the year. Over the next few years these results will be used to evaluate the impact of the remediation projects at Williamtown and recommend any improvements or further necessary works.

As at 06 Feb 19, approximately 1608 million litres of water had been treated by water treatment plants across RAAF Base Williamtown.

Media Reporting of PFAS Contamination at RAAF Base Williamtown

As media reporting is not always accurate, I would like to encourage personnel to be aware of the facts relating to the PFAS contamination at RAAF Base Williamtown. Information about how Defence is managing PFAS contamination across the estate, including RAAF Base Williamtown can be found at [www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/](http://www.defence.gov.au/Environment/PFAS/).

The PFAS project team can be contact by calling 1800 011 443 or emailing [williamtown.defence@aecom.com](mailto:williamtown.defence@aecom.com).

Alternatively, representatives from the PFAS Investigation and Management Branch are based at RAAF Base Williamtown and can be contacted on (02) 4034 7237 and (02) 4034 5000 respectively. Base and PFAS Branch staff continue to engage with the local community regarding the PFAS investigation and management activities underway in the area.

As you can appreciate we are only two months into the new year and already the pace is busy. I trust that you will enjoy these updates throughout 2019 and look forward to another year as your Senior Australian Defence Force Officer.

Kind regards

*Peter Cluff*

**Group Captain Peter Cluff**

Senior Australian Defence Force Officer  
RAAF Base Williamtown

Feb/Mar 19