

A brief history of the Royal Australian Air Force Reserves and the 2006 Reserve restructure

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THE *AIR DEFENCE ACT 1921* (CWLTH) established the Royal Australian Air Force and mandated that: “The Air Force shall be divided into two branches called the Permanent Air Force and the Citizen Air Force . . . The Citizen Air Force shall consist of the Active Citizen Air Force and the Air Force Reserve.”

Citizen Air Force

The Air Board was established on 7 February 1920, and consisted of four officer appointees, two members each from Navy and Army. One member, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Williams, submitted a plan to the Board in December 1920 that a squadron, manned by Citizen Air Force (CAF) personnel, be established in each state. Williams later became the first Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) of the Royal Australian Air Force, and hence Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams is perceived as the “Father” of the RAAF. In a similar vein, and working during the same formative years between the wars as Williams, Marshal of the Royal Air Force (RAF), Lord Hugh Trenchard, the first CAS of the RAF, is remembered, as one writer described him, as the “patron saint of airpower”.

The RAAF Reserve began late in 1921, when the Air Board was given approval for its formation. However, it was not until June 1925, when 11 officers were posted to the General Duties Branch — CAF, that the CAF was established in practice. A uniform identification patch was adopted by the CAF. This was a triangular patch worn on the shoulder of winter and dress uniforms only, and was derived from the patch of the distinguished Australian Flying Corps of World War I. In later post-War years, the patch became an unanticipated divisive instrument separating the Permanent Air Force (PAF) and the CAF, and was withdrawn from the order of dress in 1973.

Abstract

- ◆ The Royal Australian Air Force was established by the *Air Defence Act 1921* (Cwlth) with two branches: the Permanent Air Force and the Citizen Air Force.
- ◆ Five Citizen Air Force squadrons were established at state capital cities, and all deployed during World War II. However, in 1960 all Citizen Air Force flying was abandoned.
- ◆ After a review in 1978, the Citizen Air Force squadrons became part of the RAAF Active Reserve, and seven more squadrons were established.
- ◆ In 2006, the RAAF Reserve was restructured, and will increase in strength to 5000 personnel over the next 10 years.
- ◆ The RAAF Reserve has become further integrated with the Permanent Air Force, with the adoption of the Peacetime Establishment and Wartime Establishment posting system.
- ◆ The RAAF Reserve is an essential part of the Australian Defence Force, and needs to be trained and funded to the same level as the Permanent Air Force.

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Establishment of the CAF squadrons is summarised in Box 1. All five CAF squadrons deployed for operational flying duties during World War II. However, by April 1960, all CAF flying was abandoned, and the aircraft and equipment were transferred to the PAF. The CAF squadrons in the 1950s flew a variety of aircraft, such as the Vampire, Mustang, Wirraway, and Meteor. The Meteor was used extensively in the Korean War, but, because of its impaired performance above 15 000 feet, was replaced in the PAF by the US F86 Sabre. The Sabre remained in service until 1970.

When flying was suspended, the CAF squadrons were given the title Auxiliary and squadron titles were altered to, for example, 25(A) Squadron, City of Perth. At the same time, the CAF was drastically reduced in total strength to about 600.

RAAF Reserve

In 1978, an RAAF-wide review was conducted. Proposed recommendations affecting the Reserve included the transfer of the Auxiliary squadrons from Operational Command to Air Force Office and deletion of the addendum “Auxiliary”.



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Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams.

The generic term RAAF Reserve was to be introduced and to embrace all Reserve elements. These elements included the RAAF Active Reserve (RAAFAR), made up of the extant CAF squadrons; the RAAF Specialist Reserve (RAAFSR), comprising medical, legal and chaplaincy panels; and the RAAF General Reserve, representing the extant inactive General Reserve panel.

For the first time, the RAAF Reserve would be administered by a Director of Reserves Air Force within the personnel division of Air Force Office.

In December 1980, the first Director of Reserves Air Force was appointed, and in 1981 the authorised strength of the RAAFAR was increased to 1500. This enlargement stimulated the formation of seven additional RAAFAR squadrons (Box 2), to make a total of 12 RAAFAR squadrons. With the formation of No 13 Squadron on 1 July 1989, a RAAFAR squadron was established in all states for the first time.

RAAF Specialist Reserve

The RAAFSR provides the Chief of Air Force with specialised services not available within the PAF, by a wide range of Reservists. The two largest segments of the RAAFSR became active following World War II. Separately, the Medical Specialist Reserve and the Legal Reserve developed by necessity. The steady growth of the RAAFSR, in particular the health component, was stimulated by the Vietnam War and by the many and varied Australian Defence Force deployments conducted since the early 1990s.

University squadrons

University squadrons were established in each state capital city during 1950–1951, and provided the RAAF with a regular source of dedicated Reserve and Permanent officers from all

I Foundation of the Citizen Air Force squadrons

No 21 (City of Melbourne) Squadron

- Established on 20 April 1936 at RAAF Laverton.
- Initial aircraft types were Hawker Demon, Wapiti and De Havilland 60.

No 22 (City of Sydney) Squadron

- Established on 20 April 1936 at RAAF Richmond.
- Initial aircraft types were Hawker Demon and De Havilland Gypsy Moth.

No 23 (City of Brisbane) Squadron

- Established as No 23 Squadron on 3 May 1937 at RAAF Laverton.
- Initial aircraft type was Hawker Demon.
- Transferred to RAAF Archerfield, Queensland, in August 1939.
- Reborn as No 23 (City of Brisbane) Squadron on 1 April 1948 at RAAF Archerfield.
- Moved to RAAF Amberley in September 1955.

No 24 (City of Adelaide) Squadron

- Established at RAAF Amberley on 17 June 1940. Reformed on 30 April 1951 at RAAF Mallala, South Australia.
- Initial aircraft types were Mustang and Wirraway.
- Transferred to RAAF Edinburgh in May 1960.

No 25 (City of Perth) Squadron

- Formed as No 23 Squadron on 3 May 1937 at RAAF Laverton.
- Initial aircraft types were Avro Anson, Hawker Demon and Avro Trainer.
- Transferred to RAAF Pearce on 1 January 1939 and renamed No 25 (City of Perth) Squadron.

2 Foundation of RAAF Active Reserve squadrons after 1980

No 26 (City of Newcastle) Squadron

- Established 1 July 1981 at RAAF Williamstown.

No 27 (City of Townsville) Squadron

- Established 1 July 1981 at RAAF Townsville.

No 28 (City of Canberra) Squadron

- Established 1 July 1983 at RAAF Fairbairn.

No 13 (City of Darwin) Squadron

- Established 1 July 1989 at RAAF Darwin.

No 1 Airfield Defence Squadron

- Established August 1997 at RAAF Edinburgh.

No 3 Airfield Defence Squadron

- Established August 1997 at RAAF Amberley.

No 29 (City of Hobart) Squadron

- Established 1 Sept 2001 at Anglesea Barracks.

walks of life. During the two decades that the university squadrons existed, more than 2000 male officer cadets received training and instruction. The many RAAF officers undertaking Defence-funded undergraduate courses were administered by the university squadrons.

The university squadron scheme was abandoned in 1973.

Australian Air Force Cadets/Air Training Corps

The Air Training Corps (AIRC) was formed in 1941 to provide pre-entry training for 15–18-year-old men wishing to join the RAAF. In 1943, there were 13000 cadets in 395 training units throughout Australia. By 1945, 12000 AIRC cadets had joined the RAAF, more than half as aircrew. Presently, the AIRC is not a part of the RAAF Reserve forces.

In 1951, to assist post-War recruitment, RAAF Flying Scholarships were introduced to enable selected cadets to obtain a private licence at aero-clubs. By the mid 1960s, half of all entrants to the Air Force Academy were ex-AIRC cadets, a percentage maintained today at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

A Labor government decision in September 1975, perhaps responding to post-Vietnam War community anti-war feelings, discontinued all cadet training. Less than a year later, the new government announced a reversal of policy with the reintroduction of training programs on a limited basis. The Air Force Act was also amended, establishing that AIRC cadets and training officers were not members of the RAAF. Volunteers were appointed as staff to act as officers and NCOs. The Reservists who had previously fulfilled these roles were replaced.

Today, the renamed and reformed Australian Air Force Cadets is a strong, growing and vibrant youth development organisation, sponsored and supported by the Air Force as part of the Air Force family. Reserve members, notably, Director-General Cadets — Air Force, Air Commodore Roger Harrison, AM, continue to provide direction and support to the Australian Air Force Cadets.

The first female cadets were recruited in 1982. Currently, the strength of the AIRC is more than 6600 cadets and 900 administrative staff.

The 2006 restructuring of the RAAF Reserve

In May 2005, the Chief of Air Force Advisory Committee agreed to a restructure of the RAAF Reserve, including the raising of High Readiness Reserves on 1 January 2006. The restructure represents the first significant review of the Reserves since the 1960s, when the last Reserve squadron relinquished its flying role. From 2006, the strength of the RAAF Reserve will increase over the next 10 years to more

than 5000, and will represent about 24% of the uniformed RAAF members

The role of the RAAF Reserve is identified as supplementing and complementing RAAF operational capabilities, training and logistic support systems in the event of a Defence emergency or contingency, and to contribute to the RAAF capacity to undertake peacetime tasking.

The RAAF Reserve provides capability by allowing forces to augment existing capabilities and by providing additional capacities that are not affordable by the PAF, but which can be called on to provide a surge when required. In addition, the Reserve provides an extant mobilisation base from within the community.

To further strengthen the concept of the unified RAAF, integration of Reserve positions in PAF units and organisations has been further developed. Reserve establishment has two components: the Peacetime Establishment and Wartime Establishment. This posting system is being applied throughout the RAAF Reserve. The Peacetime Establishment will post Reservists within their home localities, to the nearest Reserve Training Wing squadron, and their Wartime Establishment will be the appropriate PAF unit relevant to the members' professional and trade skills. Ground Defence Reservists and Reserve Training Wing members have collocated Peacetime and Wartime Establishments.

As an example, the Peacetime Establishment of a RAAFAR Corporal Medical Assistant living in Melbourne will be No 21 Squadron at RAAF Laverton. To perform the required 32 days annual Reserve duty, the corporal will move to the Wartime Establishment, which might, for example, be 3 Combat Support Hospital (3 CSH), RAAF Richmond. In addition, if the corporal has signed the High Readiness Reserve service agreement, he or she will be liable to serve on continuous full-time service, including deployment with 3 CSH or another support unit.

From January 2006, the RAAF Reserve establishment is based on readiness notice bands.

- Band 1 comprises personnel with 0 to 28 days notice to move, and contains the High Readiness Active Reserve and High Readiness Specialist Reserve. Within Band 1, 1400 positions have been created for specialist and active Reserve members.
- Band 2 comprises personnel with 29 to 180 days notice to move, and contains more than 3200 Reserve positions.
- Band 3 comprises personnel with 181 to 365 days notice to move, and contains about 500 established Reserve positions, with 300 under training.
- Band 4 personnel have more than 365 days notice to move.

Since mid 2006, the RAAF Reserve is organised as six elements:

- High Readiness Active Reserve (HRAR);
- High Readiness Specialist Reserve (HRSR);
- Active Reserve (RAAFAR);
- Specialist Reserve (RAAFSR);
- Standby Reserve (RAAFStR); and
- Standby Reserve, Reserve Staff Group (RSG).



A68 Mustangs 24SQN at RAAF Mallala, South Australia.



A68-703 Mustang A-A banking over Labuan Island, Malaysia.

High Readiness Reserve

The High Readiness Reserve is a generic term, and comprises the HRAR and HRSR. The High Readiness Reserve is Band 1, with 0 to 28 days notice to move in the event of a Defence emergency. Depending on capability requirements, the High Readiness Reserve can contain all musterings and specialisations within the RAAFAR and RAAFSSR. These two Reserve elements have similar readiness-to-move notice and other requirements, but they have separate conditions of service. Pursuant to DGPERS-AF Directive 1/2006, *Management of the High Readiness Reserve*, the “call for” Reserve service under emergency circumstances can only be made by Chief of Air Force or an authorised delegate on the advice of the Air Commander or Force Element Group Commanders. Under the “call for” circumstances, HRAR members cannot be compelled to serve for a period greater than 90 days, and service by HRSR members is capped at 30 days. However, if members of the High Readiness Reserve are part of a general or selective “call out” made by the Governor-General, these periods of service may be exceeded. The relevant legislation to the “call out” provision is contained in the Commonwealth *Defence Legislation Amendment (Enhancement of the Reserves and Modernisation) Act 2001*. High Readiness Reserve members who are called out or called for will be placed on continuous full-time service, and administered under the provision of the *Air Force Act 1923* (Cwlth), section 4J(3). Air Force duty in these circumstances is classed as protected service, and the members’ civilian employment is protected by legislation, the *Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001* (Cwlth). Further information is available from the Office of Reserve Policy at ORSP@defence.gov.au. Relevant Service documentation is Defence Instruction (Air Force) ADMIN 4-6, *RAAF Reserve Organisation, Function and Role*.

Members of the HRAR and HRSR are eligible for a \$2500 tax-exempt Health Support Allowance payment on entering

the High Readiness Reserve, and at each anniversary entry date while they remain in the High Readiness Reserve. Similarly, members of the RAAFAR and RAAFSSR are eligible for a \$600 per annum Health Support Allowance. Furthermore, members of the High Readiness Reserve are eligible for a \$5000 tax-exempt Completion Bonus paid at the end of each 12 months of High Readiness Reserve service, provided that conditions of the High Readiness Reserve service agreement have been met.

Specialist Reserve

The RAAFSSR, containing 350 personnel, comprises medical, dental, nursing, environmental health, and allied health practitioners (including mortuary management), legal practitioners, chaplaincy, public relations, photographers, journalists, and other mixed professional groups.

Standby Reserve

The RAAFStR is the largest element; 3600 personnel who are not active Reservists and who volunteer or by regulation are contained in the RAAFStR. The RAAFStR currently has no prescribed active role in peacetime. All personnel joining the PAF or the RAAFAR from 1 July 2003 will be required, on separating from the PAF or RAAFAR, to serve a further 5 years in the RAAFStR.

Reserve Staff Group

The RSG can contain members of all musterings and specialisations within the PAF or the Reserve; however, its membership is limited by rank levels. Present policy limits RSG members to the ranks of Flight Sergeant and Warrant Officer, and Squadron Leader and above. Lower airmen and officer rank levels are permitted under extenuating circumstances.

Policy and command

Tri-Service policy for the Reserves is the responsibility of the Head Reserve Policy (HRP), a tri-Service appointment. Capability management of the Reserves is the responsibility of the Director-General Reserves — Air Force (DGRES-AF), supported by the Director Personnel Reserves — Air Force (DPR-AF). Command of Reservists embedded within the PAF is the responsibility of their respective PAF commanding officers. Command of the supporting Reserve Training Wing (RTW) rests with the Air Commander through the Commander, Training Force Element Group. RTW comprises HQ RTW and 10 Reserve squadrons located in eight capital cities and in Newcastle and Townsville, and an Airfield Defence Squadron (1 AFDS) at RAAF Edinburgh. The role of the RTW is to generate trained Reservists for employment by commanders of Force Element Groups and other commanders. Within each state, the Reserve is represented to civil employers by a regional support group, the Defence Reserves Support Council <<http://www.defence.gov.au/drsc>>.

Conclusion

Working within the present ADF budgetary paradigms, Australia's ability to afford every military modality that conventional wisdom dictates, together with the personnel training bill and servicing costs, may ultimately be unsustainable.

Defence has no real option other than to support, enlarge, properly fund, educate and fully train the Reserve forces to the same level as the full-time arm. It must dip deeply into the available expertise and national pride found throughout the Australian community, but Defence must be prepared to pay a significant moiety for that product.

In his book *The part-timers*, Group Captain Doug Hurst succinctly summarised the importance of Reserves to capability:

When judging the effectiveness of Reserves we must also look past the Reservists to those who draft the policy, draw up the plans and hand out the resources. If they do not effectively play their part, Reserve potential will not be optimised and the Reservists will not be to blame.¹

To emphasise the importance of quality personnel to Air Force, in a keynote address to the 2004 Air Power Conference in Canberra devoted to network-centric warfare, Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Angus Houston, stated:

I see network-centric warfare as a people-centric activity. Conflict is a people-centric activity. Peace is a people-centric activity. Machines are but proxies, albeit useful, but hardly an end of themselves. The human dimension of conflict is enduring, and the part that ultimately matters. People are what matter the most to my leadership team and me.²

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Competing interests

None identified.

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A1-15 Hawker Demon A-A with bomb racks.



A77-875, A77-870 Gloster Meteors in flight.