

## Basic Flying Training School

**B**FTS is located at Tamworth in northern inland NSW. BFTS is a unit under the control of Air Training Wing, but is run under contract by civilian contractor BAe Systems. The unit is led by a Commanding Officer of Wing Commander rank. It has Squadron Leader rank Flight Commanders including a Chief Military Instructor (CMI). All of these executives are Qualified Flying Instructors (QFI's). As well as support services staff (administration, education, psychological services and supply section), the unit has both military and civilian QFI's who will teach the Pilot's Courses and conduct Flight Screening.

The specific role of BFTS is:

'To produce aviation trainee pilots with the core aviation knowledge, skills and attitudes required for further training in single Service pilot training continuums.'

### SYNOPSIS OF THE COURSE

Basic Flying Training School runs four to five Basic Pilot's Courses per year, of (generally) between 15 to 30 students from a mix of the RAAF, Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Army. The Army course is longer in duration (usually 33 weeks total) than RAAF/RAN course as Army graduates do not go to 2FTS at Pearce, but are posted direct to the School of Army Aviation at Oakey in Queensland to conduct rotary wing training on the Kiowa helicopter before gaining their wings.



The RAAF students make up the bulk of the course due to the number of pilots required in Air Force. The Navy students usually comprise about 10% and the Army about 30% of the personnel on the course. The RAAF/RAN course is approximately 26 weeks long.

Your first 6 weeks at BFTS will be spent in the classroom conducting numerous ground school lectures. Typical ground school subjects include:

- Aerodynamics
- Aircraft Systems (Engines, airframes and avionics)
- Airmanship
- Air Traffic Control
- Cockpit Systems and checklist procedures

- Flying Administration (Orders and publications)
- Crew Resource Management (Safe management of assets and personnel)
- Meteorology
- Morse Code
- Navigation
- Physical Training
- Study Skills

Flying training commences after the initial 6 weeks of ground school and it will be expected that all CT4 checklists will be known from memory before your first flight. This will require a lot of preparation and practice. More about this in **Chapter 8**, 'Tips to Passing Pilot's Course'.

Flying Training at BFTS is divided into two flying phases, basic and advanced, totalling around 62 hours of flying for RAAF and Navy and around 99 hours for Army. All flying is done on the CT4B single engine air trainer aircraft. The syllabus includes training in General (day) Flying (GF), Instrument Flying (IF), Night Flying (NF), and Navigation (NAV). The Army also covers Formation (FORM) at BFTS. Throughout the flying phases you will also conduct ongoing ground school training.

### **Basic Phase**

In this phase you will start with GF, where you will look at checklist procedures, effect of controls, setting and holding aircraft attitudes (aircraft nose position reference the horizon) and work cycles. You will also become accustomed to the airborne environment and procedures. You will then look at basic aerobatics, low flying, stalling, spinning and emergency handling. During this phase you will also do your first solo! You will then be introduced to IF, which covers basic instrument interpretation skills and orientation using radio aids (NDB and VOR). This is where you begin to become accustomed to flying without external visual reference and by reference to aircraft instruments alone. You will wear a hood over your helmet so that you can not see out of the cockpit. We call this 'flying on the clocks'. Some simulator flying is also conducted.

### **Advanced Phase**

The first part of this phase involves a consolidation of the skills that you have learnt so far. You will then look at more IF including instrument approaches (NDB, VOR and ILS), Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) procedures and emergency handling. NAV training includes combinations of medium and low level navigation (500 ft AGL) with 'Time On Target' sorties. This is where you aim to not only find your target after many turn points but your aim is to be there within 15 seconds of your planned TOT. You then conduct Night NAV and learn the principles of IFR navigation where you can navigate in all weather. The Army students will then start formation with equal development of lead and wing flying skills up to solo standard in a pairs formation. This is great fun but hard work! Finally, you finish this phase with some more advanced GF culminating in your BHT (Basic Handling Test) where a pass will see you move to the next phase of your training. For RAAF and Navy, you will then head to the PC-9 at 2FTS. The Army will be off to Oakey and the Kiowa.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

The following table lists total flying hours broken down by category for Army students at BFTS. The breakdown of flying shown on the table is only representative of what you can expect there. The curriculum

can and does change from time to time in order to maximise training and learning outcomes. For the RAAF and Navy, less hours are covered in primarily IF and Nav with no FORM at all. What is not covered at BFTS is taught at 2FTS on the PC-9.

### Total Flying Hours by Sequence

Sequence	Dual	Solo	Total
<b>GF</b>	28.9	7.7	36.6
<b>IF</b>	25	0	25.0
<b>NF</b>	3.7	0.5	4.2
<b>FORM</b>	6.0	1.2	7.2
<b>Nav</b>	22.6	3.9	26.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>86.2</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>99.5</b>

### Breakdown of Student Flying Hours by Phase

Phase	Sequence	Dual	Solo	Total
<b>Basic Phase (Phase 1)</b>	GF	21.0	5.2	<b>26.2</b>
	IF	12.1	0	<b>12.1</b>
	<b>Total for Phase</b>	<b>33.1</b>	<b>5.2</b>	38.3
<b>Advanced Phase (Phase 2)</b>	GF	7.9	2.5	<b>10.4</b>
	IF	12.9	0	<b>12.9</b>
	NF	3.7	0.5	<b>4.2</b>
	FORM	6.0	1.2	<b>7.2</b>
	NAV	22.6	3.9	<b>26.5</b>
	<b>Total for Phase</b>	<b>53.1</b>	<b>8.1</b>	61.2
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>86.2</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>99.5</b>

- ➔ Dual flying involves the student flying under instruction from a QFI.
- ➔ Students usually log more hours than indicated above due to weather, aircraft unserviceabilities and the occasional requirement for remedial repeat sorties.

## Abbreviation Decode

**GF = General Flying.** Sequences flown here include basic handling of the aircraft by day and with reference to the horizon (i.e. straight and level plus turning and climbing or descending flight), all types of circuits, practice forced landings from various positions and aircraft energy states, spins, stalls and aerobatics (loop, barrel roll, aileron roll, slow roll, roll off the top, derry turn, stall turn and more).

**IF = Instrument Flying.** Basic handling with reference to instruments only (i.e. straight and level plus turning, climbing and descending flight), interception and maintenance of NDB bearings, VOR radials and DME arcs, flying both straight-in and circling instrument approaches including NDB, VOR, and ILS.

**NF = Night Flying.** Includes basic handling at night (i.e. as above) including instrument approaches and circuit operations.

**NAV = Navigation.** Students at BFTS start off with medium level visual navigation flown at altitudes up to 10,000 feet. Included in this are methods for determining your position whilst above cloud. Once medium level has been mastered, the students progress to low level visual navigation at 500' above ground level (AGL). The students are given a specific route and prepare all their own maps from templates. From a given start point they must fly the route on the map, including en-route diversions, and achieve the target point within an allowable time limit of +/- 15 seconds. Once this has been practiced they move onto IMC (Instrument Meteorological Conditions) navigation, simulating flying safely in cloud with perhaps sole reference to instruments and with an instrument approach required at the destination.

## METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

The overall instructional strategy at BFTS is designed to equip you with the required knowledge prior to applying and practicing these skills in the airborne environment. This is achieved using a combination of ground and airborne instruction: Ground training including lectures given in the classroom, cockpit procedural trainers (CPTs), part task trainers (PTTs), tutorials (TUTEs) and/or simulators (SIMs) combine to prepare you as much as possible for your flights. The airborne instruction is one-on-one and is designed to maximise the benefit of every flight hour. Thorough debriefs and tutorials are also used to consolidate the relevant knowledge after exposure to the sequence in the air.

Prior to each airborne sequence, a specific ground based instructional lecture is delivered by a QFI. You will be required to pre read the Student Air Training Guide (SATG) relating to this topic before the brief. These lectures are given to the class and cover the theory of the topic as well as the why and how to fly the sequence in question. The SATG is the manual that tells you how to fly and contains detailed chapters on all sequences that you will learn at BFTS. As such it is essential reading and just about all of its content will be understood by the end of the course. There are also many other manuals and publications you will be issued with that give insight into aircraft systems and performance, standard operating procedures, local base and air traffic procedures and instrument rules and procedures. You will have a thorough knowledge of all of them before finishing at BFTS.

*I will never forget my first solo. It was my 8<sup>th</sup> sortie. We had been flying for about 45 minutes in the circuit, when we landed and then my Instructor said to me, 'OK, she's all yours'. He got out of his seat, did up his straps, unclipped his intercom, opened the canopy and got off the wing. That was it! I was now alone in the aircraft. The seat was empty and I looked at it for about 2-3 seconds to let it sink in, then down to business. I slipped into training mode and just followed what I had learnt. I checked everything, I reckon, about 10 times! I requested a take off clearance, selected full power and I was airborne – solo. It all happened pretty quickly really. I was too busy to notice much, I was just concentrating hard on not making any mistakes and staying safe. I did 3 solo circuits that day and when I shutdown my Instructor shook my hand. I felt as though I had taken some big steps to becoming a pilot.*

## Cockpit Procedural Training (CPT)

The CPT exercises are structured events that are conducted in a similar manner to airborne exercises. Each exercise includes a formal pre flight brief, individual instruction (including remedial instruction if necessary) and debriefing. CPT objectives generally precede similar flight syllabus objectives in order to develop performance and cognitive skills prior to the sortie. They are generally practised in a cockpit mock up and are a good opportunity to practice checklists and emergency drills.

## Part Task Training and Simulators

The PTT and simulator exercises are conducted in a similar manner to airborne exercises and CPT's. They are practiced in computer based aircraft performance replicas that can be manipulated by both student and Instructor. They are used to examine and explain instrumentation and procedures before getting to the aircraft. They can also be 'paused' in mid flight to give time to explain and discuss concepts in more detail.

## Tutorials

Tutorials are usually conducted as a sit down discussion between one Instructor and 3-5 students where concepts can be 'fleshed out', questions answered and, hopefully, understanding enhanced. It also allows you to consolidate in your own mind, the concepts, techniques and procedures required for that block of instruction. Both staff and student inputs are essential. The aim of the tutorial is to correct any misunderstandings and to elaborate on newly introduced flight-training concepts in a less formal environment.

## Pre Flight Briefing

Before each exercise (which could be a flight or CPT/Sim) you will be briefed on the exercise objectives, the procedures to be employed and how the sequences are actually going to be performed. Pre flight briefs are a checksum of your understanding of the course material covered in the sortie and usually focus on the nuts and bolts (content) of the flying or other exercise. Not only **what** is to be done, but more importantly, **how** it is to be done. As your flying skills develop, you will be required to conduct certain briefs yourself.

You will not be permitted to fly the sortie and hence waste tax payer's money if your knowledge is substandard in the pre flight brief. You will be given all the resources you require to prepare for each sortie so there is no tolerance if you have not done the work to get ready for it yourself. Like the Scouts say – 'Be Prepared'!

## Flights

The objectives of each flight are given in detail in the syllabus/curriculum. Each flight builds the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to achieve the course terminal objectives. Your learning will be directed and enhanced by flight briefs and debriefs. It is a building block approach. Once taught, sequences are then assumed knowledge and are thereafter expected to be demonstrated on demand.

## Debriefing

After each exercise, you will be debriefed. The debrief will include an accurate description of progress, advice on failings, exercises performed well, areas requiring improvement and actions which might be taken to achieve better results. It is best to ensure that you take notes here to minimize the chance of you making the same errors on consecutive flights. Briefs and debriefs normally run for between 10-30 minutes each.

## ASSESSMENT

Every flight at BFTS is assessed. A Duty Instructor (DI) monitors solo flights and is contactable by radio. As discussed, for each flight there are specific new syllabus items that need to be covered as well as some revision items from previous flights. All individual sequences covered are assessed and your performance is annotated for each sequence. Throughout the flight, you will be assessed in 3 overall categories:

- **Technique.** Marked for ability to demonstrate sequences with correct and appropriate flying techniques. You are not expected to perform perfectly on your first attempt. Your expected performance level should be commensurate with your stage on Pilot's Course (i.e. later sorties require improved technique to be acceptable).
- **Airmanship.** A pilot who demonstrates good airmanship is one that can safely and effectively operate an aircraft on the ground and in the air whilst being aware of the environment around them. We call this the ability to be able to think and fly demonstrating 'situational awareness'. This requires you to have the extra capacity to not only fly the sequences but also remain within your allocated flying area, follow all clearances, be aware of your fuel state, other aircraft, weather, etc. This is achieved by constant practice as well as consistently good lookout and listenout. Good airmanship is critical to flight safety. Hence it is assessed on every flight.
- **Preparation.** Instructor's determination of the level of preparation the student has undertaken prior to each flight. It is obtained by checking students understanding and knowledge before, during and after the flight.

Each sequence completed in the flight is scored out of five (0 is a fail, 5 is exceptional), including an individual overall mark given for Airmanship, Technique and Preparation where the lowest overall mark is the score for the flight overall (eg: Tech 2, A'ship 3, Prep 4, the flight score would be 2).

There are also various flying tests and proficiency assessments throughout the course. The following is a brief insight into what the criteria are for a pass in the tests:

### Basic Phase (Phase 1)

There are two flying tests and one Solo Check conducted in the Basic Phase.

- **GF Solo.** Students are to be assessed safe solo in day General Flying and display sound airmanship principles.
- **GF Proficiency Test (GFPT).** Students are to demonstrate competency in basic general flying skills and the application of sound airmanship techniques.
- **Instrument Progress Test (IPT).** Students are to demonstrate competency in basic instrument flying skills and the application of sound airmanship techniques.

### Advanced Phase (Phase 2)

There are two flying tests conducted in Advanced Phase. Students also undergo assessment for Navigation Solo, Night Flying Solo, Formation Solo and Dual Night Navigation.

- **Nav Solo.** Students are to be assessed safe solo day navigation and display sound airmanship principles.
- **Night Flying Assessment (NF Solo).** Students are to be assessed safe solo for night flying and display sound airmanship principles.

- **Night Navigation (Dual NF NAV).** Students are to be assessed safe dual for navigation by night under VFR and display sound airmanship principles.
- **Pilot Navigation Test (PNT).** Students are to demonstrate navigation skills by performing a combination medium/low level NAVEX to safe solo standard and applying sound airmanship principles.
- **Final Handling Test (FHT).** Students are to complete an FHT for both IF and GF. They must be able to demonstrate instrument flying skills to the graduation level applying sound captaincy skills and demonstrating good airmanship principles. Also, students are to demonstrate competency in flying selected combinations of GF sequences. The application of sound airmanship in new and unusual situations must be demonstrated throughout and the performance of documented aircraft emergency procedures is to be faultless.

As already stated, the course is nominally 99 hours for Army and around 62 hours for RAAF and Navy. This amount is flexible up to a limit dependent on student skill, as students may require more hours to attain the required standard. At any stage, if a student is assessed as being not able to complete the ground or flying syllabus at the required rate or displays undesirable officer qualities, they can be suspended from training.

## REMEDIAL ACTION

If your overall score for a flight is a zero or if you score two ones in two consecutive sorties, then subject to previous satisfactory performance you will usually get another go at the flight that you failed. This is usually preceded by a sit down discussion with a senior Instructor about what the problems were and how best to fix them. This tutorial is usually followed by one or two extra flights to iron out the difficulties, called remedial sorties. The original flight is then flown again. Another failure may see the student given further remedials or presented with a 'Notice to Show Cause' (NSC) as to why they should not be suspended from Pilot's Course.

This does not mean that you are always only one flight away from suspension on Pilot's Course. Continuing or not will usually depend heavily on your overall performance on course up to that time. What you need to bear in mind is that there is strict control over the extra missions allowed according to specified instructions within Air Training Wing. There is a finite limit as to how many resources are available to be consumed by an individual. This has been carefully calculated. Remember it is taxpayer's money. If the student cannot improve to the required standard in the time allocated (including remedial sorties) then they may well fail the course. You must be able to progress at a certain rate to pass. The ADF can teach a chimp to be a pilot with hundreds of hours but the key for you is to achieve the standard as soon as possible. That way the ADF will be able to confidently say that you can cope with the learning rate for post graduate operational conversions onto more advanced aircraft.

Having said all this, it is unusual for someone to make it all the way through their training without failing at least one sortie. If you do fail a sortie, have heart and get back on the horse. The Instructors will do all they can to get you through the next one.

## DOMESTICS

Single members can expect to be accommodated in single accommodation units on the base. Rooms are of a good standard with more than suitable study facilities. Individuals rooms and common areas may be inspected at any time. Students are responsible for the cleanliness, good order and serviceability of all items in their rooms and common areas. The areas of inspection include the common room, kitchen area and laundry facilities on the floor. The Student's Mess supplies three meals a day and is used as a place to relax and unwind by students throughout course.

Married or Defacto members and their spouses/dependants will be housed in nearby married quarters or Defence Housing Authority (DHA) homes. The houses are generally of a good standard and there is often some choice as to which particular house best suits your needs. Furniture, meals and utilities will be provided by the member. The ADF will cover all removal expenses and will subsidise your rent.

## **TYPICAL DAY**

A typical working day at BFTS consists of:

0630 - 0715 (living-in students)	Breakfast
0750	Morning Briefing*
0800 – 1650	Ground school/Flying/PT
As required	Lunch
1650 (1500 on Fridays)	Stand-down
1800 - 1845 (living-in students)	Dinner
1900 - 2200 (Monday to Thursday)	Study Period

Weekends are generally free.

\* Morning briefing consists of meteorological (weather) analysis as well as latest operational status of aircraft and airfields, nav aids, etc (called NOTAMS – Notice to Airmen). Students can expect a quiz on a pre briefed topic where they will be asked random questions and expected to answer from memory or with reference to the aircraft emergency checklist (depending on the scenario). If the student is incorrect, they will be required to remain standing.

As mentioned, during the first 6 weeks the days are taken up with ground school. When flying gets underway, initially you can expect about a flight a day (when, what and who with is published on the daily flying program the day before). As the course progresses, you may fly a dual sortie (with Instructor) and a solo on the same day. Your day will be full, which is why it is important to get good rest.

## **ABOUT THE CT4**

Checkout the WINGS website at [www.getyourwings.com.au](http://www.getyourwings.com.au) to view further information regarding the CT4. There are also pictures of the CT4 including cockpit shots.



Here is a cockpit photo in the meantime. Before you fly your first sortie you will know the aircraft very well!

### Some Basic Specifications of the CT4B:

<b>Manufacturer</b>	Pacific Aerospace New Zealand
<b>Role</b>	Two-seat primary trainer
<b>Engine</b>	CT-4B One Teledyne Continental 155kW (210hp piston) IO-360-HB9
<b>Airframe</b>	2 seat single engine low wing all metal monoplane
<b>Wingspan</b>	Wing Span 26ft (7.92m); length 23ft 2in (7.06m); height 8ft 6in (2.59m)
<b>Weight</b>	CT-4B Max takeoff 1203kg (2650lb)
<b>Range</b>	CT-4B Max speed 267km/h (144kt), 75% power cruising speed 240km/h (130kt). Initial rate of climb 1250ft/min. Range at normal cruising speed 1110km (600nm)
<b>Ceiling</b>	18,500ft
<b>Fuel</b>	Useable fuel = 44 Imp Gal (199 litres), Fuel consumption (cruise) = 65 litres/hr
<b>Crew</b>	Normally two seated side by side

The CT-4 or 'Plastic Parrot' holds a special place in most pilots' hearts. It is fondly remembered for being both a fun and challenging little aircraft to fly. It is the simplest and lowest performance aircraft you are likely to encounter in your ADF career, but it is a critical first step. This may be the first aircraft you fly solo. It certainly will be the first ADF aircraft you fly solo in. Some of the techniques you learn whilst flying the CT-4 will underpin your skills from then on. It may not be a rocket-ship, but doubtless you will still find yourself 'hanging onto the stab and flailing in the breeze' (Behind the aircraft. Feeling like it is all going too fast) in the beginning. This is normal. But with hard work and determination you should quickly become accustomed to your new 'office'.

Remember to take one step at a time. Work each day (and evening) towards the next flight or event. Keep just a little ahead of the curve and have perhaps the next sim or tutorial prepared and ready to go in the event of a programming change due to weather or aircraft serviceability problems.

## STUDENT COUNSELLING

The course you are about to embark on is not like any other that you may have experienced previously. Certainly there will be elements of the training that you will recognise and as such you will no doubt address them with your acquired skills. You will not be expected to have the answers to all the difficulties you may encounter during your time at the school. That's where your course mates, your Instructors and the training fit in. In conjunction with your motivation, dedication and strength of spirit, the Student Counsellor can help you work toward the goal of graduating you from BFTS, thence on to wings. They are trained professionals who have 'seen it all' before and are keen to help you get over the line. So feel free to use them. They are free!

## **AND FINALLY...**

You are about to start on one of the biggest challenges in your life. You will find the BFIS staff friendly and helpful and they will do what they can to get you through Pilot's Course and make you a military aviator. Ultimately though, the end result comes down to you. The course involves a lot of effort and dedication on your part, but you will reap the rewards of your own efforts come postings time. You will need to study each night, demonstrating your acquired knowledge the next day in the flight. It is great fun and you will be able to see an immediate quantifiable return on your study from the night before. You will find the course challenging, stimulating and highly rewarding. It is worth the effort.

## A Pilot's Life

---

**O**btaining your Wings is your ticket to a great career as a pilot in the ADF. You will now be eligible to undergo an operational conversion onto any aircraft within your Service. You will be notified before the end of Pilot's Course as to where your next posting will be and what aircraft type you will be flying. As mentioned, the final decision depends upon many factors including your preferences and ability, but ultimately, Service requirements and vacancies at the time will be the clinchers.

This chapter will give you brief outline of your life after obtaining your Wings. It gives you a quick snapshot of life as an ADF pilot. However, it cannot be too specific due to the great variation of flying jobs available in the ADF, as well as the fact that the flying and peripheral jobs within a squadron often vary daily themselves.

### YOUR FIRST POSTING

Often, ADF pilots remember their first posting as being their best one. Your first posting will be to an operational aircraft no matter what Service. The practicalities of this are that whilst pilots will always be needed, some conversions onto aircraft can only be accomplished at a certain rate due to numerous factors including availability of aircraft, availability of instructional staff to accomplish the conversions and the numbers of personnel slotted to undergo these conversions. These conditions may cause some delays in your training on to an operational aircraft. It basically boils down to timing. It also differs between aircraft types and Services. Operational tempo is a big factor. For instance, as this book goes to press, there is a queue to



undergo conversion onto the C130 J Hercules transports. This aircraft type has been heavily involved in Coalition Operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years, which has currently manifested itself in less airframes and crews available for training.

The net result of all this is that whilst you will be posted to a Squadron, it could possibly be a 6-12 month wait before your actual conversion starts in some extreme cases. If you are Navy or RAAF, you may be fortunate and offered an opportunity to remain flying whilst gathering and consolidating captaincy skills on the PC-9 with the Intermediate Flying Scheme (IFS) at Pearce or CFS at East

Sale. However, this is not available to all ADF junior aircrew, especially Army pilots. The other option is for you to be posted to your Squadron immediately, most likely into a ground based position, whilst waiting for your conversion. This can provide many opportunities including trips away where you can mingle with other aircrew and learn about the aircraft and its role. Sometimes slots on conversions come up earlier than anticipated, for whatever reason, and you may well be the first one notified to fill that position.

Whilst delays can occur, generally speaking your conversion should start reasonably quickly as the ADF want to use your specialist skills ASAP. So, whenever you arrive at your conversion unit, do so with your notebook open and be ready to learn all over again. It's fun! You get to operate some fantastic hardware and do some amazing things. But like anything, you will need to be prepared to work hard, particularly in your first posting.

## TYPICAL CONVERSIONS

Here is a brief snapshot of some of the operational conversions and their rough duration that you could undertake after Wings or as a component of Pilot's Course (for the Army).

Aircraft	Squadron	Course Duration
BAe Hawk 127	No 79 Sqn, RAAF Pearce.	15 weeks
	No 76 Sqn, RAAF Williamstown.	24 weeks
C130J	No 37 Sqn, RAAF Richmond.	16 weeks
P3C	No 292 Sqn, RAAF Edinburgh.	16 weeks
King Air 350	No 32 Sqn, RAAF East Sale/173 Surv Sqn.	12 weeks
C17	No 36 Sqn, RAAF Amberley.	18 weeks
CL-604 Challenger	No 34 Sqn, RAAF Fairbairn.	6 weeks
AS350B Squirrel	No 714 Sqn, HMAS Albatross.	25 weeks
S70 B2 Seahawk	No 814 SQN, HMAS Albatross.	12 weeks
Bell 206B Kiowa	School of Army Aviation, Oakey.	12 weeks
S70 A9 Black Hawk	School of Army Aviation, Oakey.	12 weeks

## LIFE IN THE SQUADRONS

Although ADF squadrons perform different roles commensurate with the aircraft that they fly, you can expect that your first tour will be a busy but thoroughly enjoyable one. You will take time to become comfortable with the new aircraft type that you fly and this will only be achieved with consistent study and exposure to the aircraft. You can expect that you will spend some time away from home. The duration of this time away will depend upon the aircraft type. Once you are cleared operationally you may be deployed to hostile locations for months.

When you are not flying, you will normally be involved in trip planning, mission preparation and odd Squadron jobs. These 'odd jobs' will be your Secondary Duties and can include such things as base projects like public relations matters, amending flying publications, preparing briefs, missions and deployment planning, being involved in flying safety programs, recording squadron history, organising squadron social events, etc. Be sure to perform these Secondary Duties well as mistakes and omissions here will highlight you as a poor performer on the ground and can reflect poorly on you as an officer.

Following is a brief synopsis of life in a squadron as an ADF pilot looking at the various ADF operational roles. As discussed, it can be very different from squadron to squadron. One thing is always certain, ADF flying jobs don't lack variety!

## Fast Jet

On completion of wings, if selected for Fast Jet you will be required to convert to the Hawk aircraft initially (at 79 Squadron RAAF Pearce). You will then complete a 6-month Introductory Fighter Course (IFC) at RAAF Williamtown near Newcastle, NSW. At course completion, you will go on to a six-month operational conversion to the F/A-18A Hornet, also at RAAF Williamtown. Thereafter, new pilots will be posted to operational squadrons such as 3 or 77 Squadron at RAAF Williamtown, or 75 Squadron at RAAF Tindal in the NT. You are now a junior 'knuck' or fighter pilot. You will spend the next few years learning your 'trade'. Just about all of your sorties from now on will be solo, not in the 'tub' (dual seat Hornet). You will fly just about every day (usually just one sortie a day), getting exposure and experience in the various roles and capabilities of the aircraft. You will conduct sorties involving ACM (Air Combat Manoeuvring) or 'dogfighting', Radar Intercepts (from simple 2 v 2 up to Large Force Employment), Escort, Strike, Close Air Support and Fleet Support. They will all be in formation with other Hornets. You will also fly most of these roles at night and no doubt will be involved in major air exercises such as Pitch Black, Arnhem Thunder and Aces North, to name just a few. You will be living and breathing fighter flying.

After all you have accomplished, you will be starting at the bottom of the food chain when you arrive at your Squadron. You will need to be humble and receptive to advice provided by other squadron members who have more experience than you. When upgraded to C Category Hornet pilot, you will then become fully operational and you will be cleared to go into actual combat missions if required.

Although generic, the following is a brief snapshot of a day in the life of a fighter pilot in the RAAF:

0800 - 0820	Morning brief
0830 - 0915	Brief mission
0915 - 1000	Suit up/preflight/start
1000 - 1130	Fly sortie
1130 - 1200	Review tape
1200 - 1315	Debrief mission
1315 - 1400	Secondary duties
1400 - 1730	Prepare for next days mission or fly another sortie.

This profile is for a relatively short and simple mission. Some may take longer, especially those involving multi ship formations or during large exercise scenarios.

At the end of your first tour, your posting options will be; remain at your Squadron for another tour, become a Test Pilot, go on exchange and fly a fighter overseas, become a Qualified Flying Instructor or, become a Fighter Combat Instructor. After that, you will probably return to an operational squadron to complete your IMPS. Junior fighter pilots don't often get ground jobs, but they do happen occasionally.

F111 Bomber conversions are no longer being conducted pending the retirement of the aircraft type in 2010. Shortly, the F/A-18F Super Hornet will be available as an option to be posted to after IFC.

The Super Hornet will be flown by a pilot in the front seat and an Air Combat Officer (ACO) in the rear. It is an extremely capable aircraft suited to a wide variety of fighter, attack and strike roles. It will be based at RAAF Amberley in Queensland and will provide an awesome opportunity for junior pilots as it comes online.

## Transport / Maritime

Transport or Maritime pilots will undergo the required conversion training either at their posted Squadron or overseas. This will generally involve significant simulator training and some flying of the real aircraft. They will then become a category C or D co-pilot (dependant on aircraft type) and will occupy the right hand seat of the aircraft. You can expect to remain in the RHS (again, depending upon the aircraft type) for about 2 years before being considered for Captaincy. Your experience will grow commensurate with your exposure to the full capability and role of the aircraft. For example, some squadrons require further training to be able to conduct tactical operations, such as flying under night visions goggles and operating the full suite of the Electronic Counter Measures (ECM). An example is the AEW&C Wedgetail which has a very specific systems role in addition to actually just learning to fly the aircraft. Any additional training required for your aircraft type will normally be carried out at your Squadron. You can expect that you will fly with some very experienced captains, flight engineers and loadmasters. Soak up their experience. Be a human sponge. You will learn quickly, have a great time and be exposed to some great flying both in Australia and abroad.

A VIP pilot is not your typical 'trashie', so here is a brief snapshot of what to expect. The life of a VIP pilot usually involves a couple of days at work where the next trip is meticulously planned. The trip may be anything from 1 day to 3 weeks. Flight plans, alternate airfields, fuel stops, parking, security issues, accommodation, catering, crew transport, timings, customs and quarantine, manifests and diplomatic clearances are just some of the things that need to be considered. There is also no such thing as a 5 day week at VIP. Your mobile could ring anytime if you are on standby. Politicians like to appear 'spontaneous' and 'reactive to crises' so if you follow the news and notice where the TV cameras are, you may get a head start on your flight planning! You get to go to some great places however, and you are flying very modern aircraft decked out with the latest equipment.

No matter which transport squadron you go to there will be more than enough exciting flying for you. After gaining some captain experience, transport pilots usually have the option of becoming a QFI, going to a ground job or remaining in your Squadron as a senior supervisory captain. There are overseas exchanges and Test Pilot positions available but there are lots of pilots to share them amongst. 'Trashies' will generally end up going back to their original aircraft type or another within ALG (Air Lift Group) after a spell.

In the world of the P3-C Orion, a Maritime Captaincy is a big deal. You will have a crew of a dozen or so operating modern electronic warfare in international, perhaps hostile airspace at about 300 feet above the ocean at night dealing with highly classified information. Some of the crew members will have 15 years or more experience on the aircraft, so as a captain you need to earn their respect. This begins as soon as you start as a co-pilot. Progression to Maritime Captain usually happens within about 3 years from conversion, subject to satisfactory performance. Some experienced Maritime Captains may have a brief sabbatical as an Instructor before being sucked back into the 'Fish Head' world. Maritime pilots get a lot of flying and spend quite a bit of time away on deployment. It is a specialist role and as such they tend to remain in SRG.

It is important that you work hard to ensure that you will be ready for command when your time comes. Command is not offered to everyone. You will need command (captain) time to be competitive for QFI course and to remain flying. The ADF needs captains, so work hard and become one.

Army fixed wing pilots adopt a similar profile to ALG pilots. On command, Army pilots have an additional option in that they can choose to apply to go back to rotary wing if vacancies exist.

*I was posted to Canberra based 34 Squadron responsible for VIP movements direct from Pilot's Course. VIP Bizjets sounded like a cool posting. Well it got off to a flying start on arrival when I was told that I was required to attend aircraft conversion training for the next 6 weeks in a simulator in New York! It wasn't all fun though; it was hard work learning to fly a modern bizjet straight from the PC-9. The simulator was so capable that my first trip in the real aircraft was as the co pilot flying the Prime Minister. At that point, I only had 250 hours in the logbook!*

## Rotary Wing

As you already know, flying rotary wing means that you are in the Navy or Army. Navy pilots will conduct their initial rotary wing conversion onto the Squirrel and then onto their respective operational rotary wing type. You may fly the Agusta A109E Navy choppers to build an experience base in the interim. Again you are aiming to become a helicopter captain and in the Navy this will obviously involve a fair amount of time at sea.

Army pilots complete the HCC and the HTC on the Kiowa before undertaking their operational conversion onto the Blackhawk, Chinook, ARH Tiger or the Eurocopter MRH. The Army also has access to Eurocopter EC 135s and the Agusta A109E which have allowed pilots posted to the ARH Tiger to sharpen their skills on these glass cockpit helicopters whilst waiting for the aircraft to be fully in service.

Military rotary wing is some of the most exciting flying you can do. Helicopters by their very nature need to be 'flown' – there is very little use of autopilot or automation, so you will just about always have your hands and feet on the controls. Most of the flying is done close to the ground, so as such it can be very satisfying. Other than in the training role, ADF rotary wing assets are often utilized away from home either on deployments, exercises or even in aid to the civilian community (in the form of med-evac, disaster relief and resupply). You can expect to be involved in anything from troop lift, weapons delivery (firing rockets, machine guns or rotary cannons), counter terrorism operations (usually conducted in major cities), special forces operations, naval shipping support, anti-shipping and submarine warfare, ECM, surveillance and peace keeping operations. As such there is no such thing as a typical day!

*I really enjoyed life as a Navy 'birdy'. I was posted to Sea Hawks and as part of their role I operated from numerous ships and spent a lot of time at sea. Operating from a ship was a challenge in itself; try to land on a rolling deck at night with strong winds. It was a great life. You were at the sharp end of the ship with maybe 1 or 2 other pilots on board. We had our own maintenance team and went wherever the ship went. We did plenty of flying and most of it was varied. Anti-sub one day, rappelling the next. It was a tight nit group and we worked well as a team to get the job done. I have a lot of respect for the Seahawk. She is a reliable and very capable aircraft.*

## Training

Just like the day you finish school, you don't walk in the next week as a teacher. It is normally the same in the ADF. In order to become involved in training you normally need to have had some experience. You need to be able to operate the aircraft proficiently but also have spare capacity to be able to 'quack' (i.e. talk sense at the appropriate time) and be able to fly a nice demonstration at the same time. This will take some time to master.

To become an ADF Flying Instructor, you will need a minimum of 250 hours command on any ADF type. Instructional positions include QFI, FCI, QHI (Qualified Helicopter Instructor) or perhaps even a senior check captain. All require additional training. Fixed wing QFI training is done at CFS where pilots will attend Flying Instructor's Course (FIC) which lasts for about 4 months. You will then normally instruct on the PC-9 at 2FTS or CT4 at BFTS for about 2 years before being posted back to your operational aircraft type. You may also conduct and instruct conversions onto your core aircraft type. Some QFI's remain in the training world and that can be rewarding in itself. Some end up at CFS where they teach qualified pilots to be Instructors. It is from this CFS staff that the RAAF chooses the pilots to form the RAAF Roulettes aerobatic team.

Rotary wing QHIs are trained at the School of Army Aviation at Oakey.

Hornet FCI's are trained at 2OCU by other more experienced FCI's. This is a very demanding 6 month course and is role specific.

## TYPICAL CAREER PROFILE

As previously mentioned you can expect to serve for at least 10 years once achieving your Wings (Army pilots may have a shorter commitment depending upon your avenue of entry). You will be posted to a flying job after graduating and typically most flying tours last 2-3 years. You can expect at least 2 further postings (also called 'tours') during your IMPS. These postings may be an extension of your current tour or could be out of your Squadron to another flying job or even a ground job. There are more pilots than slots (more bums than seats) and many ground jobs need actual pilots to perform them, so it can be quite competitive to remain flying. Flying positions in rank (and the same for ADF hierarchy) are shaped like a triangle, so you will find that as you are promoted and become more senior the flying opportunities diminish. This suits some people and not others, however it is a normal facet of life as an ADF aviator and you should bear it in mind.

## SOCIALLY

Along the way you will form many strong friendships, many of which you will have for life. Most pilots will tell you that their best friends are in the military. The camaraderie that you build with people is often forged under operational conditions and is a unique element of the military. This leads to many social occasions that add spice to what is already an exciting lifestyle. Additionally, you will automatically be members of the Officer's Mess on your base or ship providing an excellent opportunity to mix with officers outside your squadron from different backgrounds and specialisations.

## FAMILY

Being a pilot means that you fly places. Usually this means time away from home and family. Although it varies dramatically between aircraft types and service, on some aircraft you can expect to be away from home for possibly up to 6-7 months of the year. Whilst great for single pilots, it can put stresses on those with a spouse and children. The ADF does have an excellent support network, but the very nature of the job is that at least some of your time will be spent away from your home base.

In addition, every 2 to 3 years you can expect to receive a posting. This could be to the same location, but it is often to a new base. You may have to pack up everything every few years and go through a removal. If you are single, you will enjoy seeing different parts of the country. If you have children, then you will have to enrol them in a new school and your spouses employment can also be a problem. The ADF have a removals cell to assist with this transition and to make the process smoother.