

# NUNAWADING MILITARY HISTORY GROUP

## MINI NEWSLETTER No. 3

### High Achievers Blazing a Trail Through the Sky

Dedication, commitment and collective passion for aviation has guided the careers of three Royal Australian Air Force female aircrew members who are currently appointed to key command positions within Surveillance and Response Group Units (SRG).

With their career journeys taking on a similar trajectory, Squadron Leader Melissa Houston (Number 11 Squadron C Flight Commander), Squadron Leader Jenna Higgins (Number 10 Squadron Executive Officer) and



Squadron Leader Trisha Kelly (No. 292 Squadron B Flight Commander) first trained together during the AP-3C Orion Navigator/Communicator Conversion course held at No. 292 Squadron in January 2009.

Today, their appointments within No. 92 and No. 42 Wings based at RAAF Base Edinburgh are a significant achievement.

"I am proud to say that Trisha and I are the first female Flight Commanders at 11SQN and 292SQN," Squadron Leader Houston said.

"Notably, Jenna is the third at 10SQN which is a reflection on the progression of Air Force women in leadership positions within the Unit and SRG."

**From left: Squadron Leader Melissa Houston, Squadron Leader Jenna Higgins and Squadron Leader Trisha Kelly. Photo: Leading Aircraftwoman Jacqueline Forrester**

With these key milestones to be celebrated, Squadron Leader Houston said she was looking forward to a future when females in leadership roles were not "history making" just part of the norm.

"We take great comfort knowing that young girls who aspire to be aircrew or any category group within Air Force have the same opportunities to meet the same criteria for career satisfaction and progression."

Collectively, females make up around 7-8 per cent of the total aircrew workforce across the three Edinburgh-based squadrons with 11 female aircrew members at 11SQN, four at 10SQN and one at 292SQN with female aircrew students currently on course.

As such, Air Force women fulfilling sub-unit command roles within these units is a notable achievement with their measurable skills, knowledge and experience guiding the appointments.

In addition to female aircrew participation in leadership roles, notably key command positions such as Commander SRG (Air Commodore Barbara Courtney) and Officer Commanding No. 44 Wing (Group Captain Ruth Elsley) are among many other senior leadership roles currently supported by Air Force women across SRG.

# Australia's Armidale Class and Cape Class Patrol Boats to be replaced with the new Arafura Class

The first two vessels are already under construction by Lürssen Australia and ASC in Adelaide. The remaining 10 vessels will be constructed by Lürssen Australia and Cvmec at Henderson in Western Australia under the SEA 1180 OPV program.

Lürssen Australia is the prime contractor working with key shipbuilding partners Cvmec in Western Australia and ASC in South Australia to deliver the OPV capability for the Royal Australian Navy.



The program will replace and improve upon the capability delivered by the Armidale Class and Cape Class patrol boats, which entered service in 2005.

The primary role of the OPV will be to undertake constabulary missions and the OPV will be the primary ADF asset for

maritime patrol and response duties.

Minister Price announced on 3 April the award of a \$365 million managing contract to Lendlease Building Contractors for the first tranche of works at HMAS Stirling and the Australian Maritime Complex.

The new facilities will support Navy's new Perth-based ships, as well as the increased number of Navy personnel living and training at HMAS Stirling.

The facilities at HMAS Stirling include living-in accommodation and a specialist training centre to train Navy's crews in operating and maintaining the new Arafura Class OPVs.

The Australian Maritime Complex site will be used by Navy, in concert with key industry partners, for operational maintenance and through-life support of the Arafura Class.

The announcement follows the commencement of construction of the remaining 10 new Arafura Class OPVs, being built at the Cvmec shipyard in Henderson. The first two OPVs are being built in Adelaide.

The first of the Arafura Class vessels, HMAS *Arafura*, will be based at HMAS Stirling, is planned to commence trials in 2021 and begin operational employment from 2022.

# Defence response to COVID-19



Australian Army soldiers support New South Wales Police with quarantine compliance checks in Sydney. Photo: Corporal Chris Beerens  
**National - Approximately 1500 personnel are deployed as part of Operation COVID-19 Assist**

- The Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC, announced Operation COVID-19 Assist on April 1, 2020.

- Current nation-wide Defence support includes:

- Reconnaissance and planning support teams to all state and territory governments to assist with emergency response planning.

- Contact tracing teams to work with

authorities.

- Supporting law enforcement agencies with mandatory quarantine arrangements for air arrivals into Australia.
- The ADF will not be authorised as law enforcement officers as this remains the responsibility of the states and territories.
- Additionally, the ADF:
  - Has established the three-star-led COVID-19 task force to coordinate Defence's internal response to COVID-19 and support the whole-of-government effort.
  - Is supporting Emergency Management Australia-led (EMA) planning for the National Communicable Disease Incidence of National Significance Plan in response to COVID-19.
  - Is supporting the Department of Health with logistics and specialist staff.
  - Has provided health, logistics and movements support to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Border Force repatriation and care of Australian Nationals on Christmas Island and Howard Springs via RAAF bases Learmonth and Darwin.
  - Has been supplying clinical and epidemiological support to the Department of Health National Incident Room since early February 2020.

## State-by-state breakdown

*\*Note: Personnel in Joint Task Group headquarters, supporting roles, and those preparing for tasks are included in overall state-based figures but are not captured in the list of tasks.*

### New South Wales - 483 personnel

- 329 ADF personnel are supporting state police quarantine and self-isolation directions at Sydney Airport, ports, local hotels and residences.
- Since March 26, 16 soldiers from the Army have been assisting the Foodbank charity, based in Bankstown, Sydney. The soldiers are helping to pack food parcels for people who have been required to self-isolate and have no means to secure their own food supply.
- 25 personnel are involved in planning support and contact tracing teams.

### Queensland - 270 personnel

- 29 ADF personnel are supporting state police with the reception of international arrivals at Cairns and Brisbane airports.
- 30 personnel are supporting state police quarantine and self-isolation compliance checks..

- 9 personnel are involved in planning support.
- 69 personnel are providing support to Queensland Police to protect Indigenous communities

#### **Victoria - 39 personnel**

- 7 personnel are involved in planning support and contact tracing teams.
- 16 personnel are assisting with surgical mask production
- 1 person is supporting state police with their quarantine compliance management efforts.

#### **Western Australia - 166 personnel**

- 103 personnel are supporting state police with their quarantine compliance management efforts.
- 11 personnel are supporting contact tracing and planning efforts.

#### **South Australia - 30 personnel**

- 11 personnel are involved in planning support.

#### **Tasmania - 72 personnel**

- 30 personnel are supporting state police quarantine compliance checks in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.
- 26 personnel are involved planning support and contact tracing teams.

#### **Northern Territory - 110 personnel**

- 54 personnel are providing logistics, communications and medic support to the NT Police at three Northern Territory border control locations on the Stuart, the Barkly and the Victoria Highways.
  - The logistics are focused on catering and other sustainment operations for the NT Police in the remote locations.
  - The communications support will assist police data and voice transmission in the remote locations with limited reception.
  - The medic support will assist police in the health screening of civilians who are trafficking through the areas.
  - ADF personnel are not involved in the enforcement of border controls.
- 7 personnel are involved planning support and contact tracing teams.
- 6 personnel have deployed to perform quarantine compliance checks.

#### **Australian Capital Territory – 22 personnel**

- 11 personnel are involved in planning support and contact tracing teams.

### ***Defence News***