Australia has always been an air-minded nation. It was the first of the Dominions to follow Britain in constituting a separate Air Force.

But, even long before this was achieved, there had been strong national support behind demands for the setting up of a unified air command.

The R.A.A.F. was formally constituted in 1921—only three years after the Royal Air Force—but Australian squadrons, years before that, had fought overseas in World War I alongside the men of the Royal Flying Corps in Egypt and in France.

Australia with its great distances and relatively sparsely populated areas separating the major cities was peculiarly suited for the development of aviation.

At the turn of the century air-minded Australians were thinking of the conquest of the air. Lawrence Hargrave had been experimenting with his box-kites, and aviation pioneers such as Houdini and Duigan had convinced the public that manned flight was more than a dream.

THE BEGINNING

In 1911 the Government was considering a plan for the introduction of an Aviation Corps for the Australian Army, and then in 1913 Lieutenant Eric Harrison (an Australian who had gone to England to learn to fly) and Henry Petre received their commissions in the Australian Military Forces as aviation instructors. With them from England they brought a Bristol Box-kite, two Deperduissins and two BE2As; as well, a number of mechanics made the journey.

Meanwhile, a site at Point Cook, about 16 miles west of Melbourne, had been secured for the setting up of an establishment for flying training, and the first military flight there took place on 1 March 1914.

The pattern for the sending overseas of Australian air contingents was set on 30 November 1914, when a small air
expedition was sent to New Guinea. In the following February, Australia agreed to a request from the Viceroy of India for pilots and aircraft to operate in the Tigris Valley against Turkey, and a force of four officers and about 40 men—the famous "half flight"—sailed from Australia in April, 1915, and operated alongside Townshend's army before joining the Australian Flying Corps in Egypt in 1916.

**SERVICE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Meanwhile, more Australians were being trained, and in March of 1916, No. 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (28 officers and 181 men) sailed for Egypt and was in action by June. It was to be joined by three more squadrons of the A.F.C., which were to see service in Palestine and in France. One pilot, F. H. McNamara (later to be Air Vice-Marshal in the R.A.A.F.) won the Victoria Cross for rescuing a fellow aviator downed in the desert.

Although at the end of the 1914-1918 war the squadrons of the A.F.C. were disbanded, there continued to be a keen interest in military aviation, both by the public and Australian services.

**FIRST AIR BOARD FORMED**

An early—and temporary—Air Board of four members was charged with the task of preparing an air policy. The Navy nominated Major S. J. Goble (later Air Vice-Marshal Goble, C.B.E., D.S.O., D.S.C., who had flown with the Royal Navy Air Service) and Captain W. Nunn (Vice-Admiral Nunn, C.B., C.S.I., C.M.G., D.S.O.), while the Army was represented by Brigadier-General T. Blamey (Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, K.C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O.) and Lieutenant-Colonel R. Williams. (Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O.).

Williams, an Australian army officer who had learned to fly at Point Cook, and who commanded No. 1 Squadron in the Middle East, looked to the future and saw the answer to Australia's problems of distance and defence. He never wavered in his fight for an Australian Air Force, and an Air Force with an autonomous command.

**£500,000 SET ASIDE FOR MILITARY AVIATION**

The Government set aside £500,000 for military aviation and an additional £100,000 for civil aviation. It
allowed for the “Air Corps” to be under the direction of the Minister for Defence, who would be assisted by an Air Council consisting of a naval member, a military member, two members of Air Board (one each of these to be nominated respectively by the Navy and Military members), and the Controller of Civil Aviation. The new Air Board was constituted on 9 November 1920, with Williams as First Air Member, Goble as Second Air Member, Captain McBain as Director of Equipment, and Mr. Joyce as Finance Member; Mr. Coleman was Secretary.

BIRTH OF THE R.A.A.F.

On 15 February 1921, the Air Board sent a recommendation to the Air Council that the “Australian Air Force” be formed as from 31 March 1921, and so the die was cast. The Air Council and the Minister approved, and so came into being the “Royal Australian Air Force” (the prefix Royal being granted in July the same year).

This formal blessing for the infant Air Force carried with it no assurance for an easy childhood, however, because to the continuing inter-service contest for control was now added the growing realisation that aircraft were not cheap toys to be bought and played with by amateurs. This realisation of costs was an early warning which air planners today recognise as an even more acute problem. All these early problems, coupled with the great depression of the early 1930’s, made certain that the R.A.A.F. did not lack growing pains.

Twenty-one officers and 130 airmen, belonging either to the headquarters in Melbourne or to the Flying Training School and aircraft depot, both based at Point Cook, made up the initial strength of the young service.

MORE AIRCRAFT THAN MEN

Nevertheless, in its small beginnings, the R.A.A.F. did not lack for numbers of aircraft. In addition to the 20 Avro 540Ks, 10 Sopwith Pups, 6 Fairey MK 3D seaplanes, as well as 6 “Australian made” 504Ks, there were in reserve the 128 aircraft (made up of DH9s, DH9As and SE5As) which the British Government had given to Australia in return for Australia’s war gifts of aircraft. It meant that for a period, the R.A.A.F. probably held the unique record of having more aircraft than men.

As well as a permanent air force, the formation of an air force reserve was decided, but there were practically no funds either for pay or uniforms.
Despite all the early financial and technical setbacks associated with the development of aviation, the air maintained its urgent appeal. The Australian public has always sensed that its destiny is linked with the air. The veterans of the 1914-1918 sky battles, along with the enthusiasts who had gone to England and learned to fly at their own expense, helped to provide and develop the appeal of aviation, and so either within the ranks of the R.A.A.F. or in the blazing of the new trails for civil aviation the story was continuously being told.

**ERA OF THE PERSONALITY**

It was the era of the personality, in which the symbol was an open cockpit and the pilot’s scarf streamed out into the wind. It built up the mystique which centres around every pilot; a mystique which has persisted even though tomorrow’s pilot may sit in an enclosed and pressurized capsule without protective clothing of any kind.

It was the era in which crowds waited hours for a lone aircraft to land after some record-breaking flight, to “chair” the crew triumphantly to a welcoming banquet. Wing Commander Goble and Flight Lieutenant I. E. McIntyre circled the Australian mainland in a Fairey seaplane; Kingsford-Smith and Ulm crossed and recrossed the Pacific; Hinkler and other Australians blazed their way across the newspaper headlines. **It was the “Golden Hour” of Australian aviation.**

**PROGRAMME OF DEVELOPMENT**

The programme of development which had been put forward in the 1922-1923 programme for the R.A.A.F. envisaged a minimum permanent establishment (“to be attained gradually”) of 108 officers and 791 other ranks.

As was to be expected, the first R.A.A.F. flying was taken over by those 1914-1918 veterans of air battles who did not want to leave the arena, but on 31 January 1923, 14 trainees began elementary flight training at Point Cook. There was never any shortage of recruits for the early courses, but no one could foresee in this keen interest the torrent of young men who would come forward for flying training during the period of World War II’s Empire Air Training Scheme some 20 years later.

“Real estate” expansion also took place along with that of recruits and aircraft. No. 1 Squadron and No. 3 Squadron were formed at Point Cook on 1 July 1929, and a short time afterwards, the former moved to Laverton
and the latter Squadron moved to Richmond, in N.S.W., where a site had been acquired. Today, Richmond is the second largest R.A.A.F. base in Australia with over 2,000 personnel engaged in transport flying and major aircraft overhauls.

**COMMISSIONS IN R.A.F.**

Traffic of skills between the British and Australian Air Forces has been almost continuous. From the early days, the R.A.A.F. found that its trained personnel (particularly pilots with short-service commissions) were proving attractive to the R.A.F., and by 1939, of approximately 500 who had undergone the R.A.A.F. cadet course at Point Cook, more than 200 had accepted short-service commissions with the Royal Air Force, Great Britain paying Australia for the cost of their pilot and officer training.

Perhaps there was no great public awareness of the approaching holocaust, but the late 1930's saw thinking Australians acknowledge an imminent threat from Japan, which was building up a massive air and naval force along with a commercial drive to the southward.

**FOUNDING OF AUSTRALIAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY**

Meanwhile, the foreshadowed tapering off of the flow of British aircraft began to help the infant Australian aircraft industry which had commenced its struggle for recognition. In 1923, De Havilland started its Australian factory, and was manufacturing Moth aircraft. The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, which had been incorporated in 1936, was to develop the Wirraway from the basic American NA33 design.

Wing Commander L. Wackett, who had commanded A Squadron in the 1914-1918 war, was convinced that Australia should have its own design and manufacturing organization, and in 1924, he convinced the R.A.A.F. that he should open an “R.A.A.F. Experimental Section” at Randwick, N.S.W. With a devoted band of specialists and artisans they worked on propellers and engines and, more importantly, designed and built several land and seaplanes. The Widgeon seaplane was one of his projects. Lack of funds closed the “Experimental Section,” but Wackett continued on with his dream, and was later to become Managing Director of C.A.C. and receive a knighthood for his contribution to Australian aviation.
THE R.A.A.F. COMES OF AGE

The Royal Australian Air Force really came of age as a fighting service in the war of 1939-1945.

When Australia followed Britain in declaring war, the R.A.A.F., under Air Vice-Marshal Goble as Chief of the Air Staff, had 310 officers and 3,179 airmen operating 12 squadrons, not all of which were at full strength; it had 246 aircraft, including 164 operational type, many of which were obsolete.

By the middle of World War II (21 years after its constitution), the R.A.A.F. had its greatest-ever strength of more than 20,000 officers, 144,000 airmen and 18,000 airwomen, with 3,037 operational aircraft and 2,808 Trainers.

SERVICE IN EVERY THEATRE OF WAR

Its members served in every theatre of action, either with independent Australian squadrons, in the Royal Air Force, or in the thousand-and-one air activities in which the Allies gathered without thought of nationality, other than the aim of winning the war. The reputation which the R.A.A.F. built for itself as a fighting service, and the individuality of Australian airmen—training under the E.A.T.S. scheme, as transfers from the R.A.A.F. or in the R.A.F. squadrons—was not without its cost. Nearly 11,000 men were lost in action all over the world. In Europe, the R.A.A.F. lost 5,500 killed, and nearly 3,000 in the Pacific. Graves in the Middle East, in Burma, and in the Far East, record the sacrifices they made.

Recognition of the efficiency and gallantry of R.A.A.F. members was not long delayed, and by the end of the hostilities their awards totalled 2 Victoria Crosses, 4 C.B.s, 12 C.B.E.s, 62 D.S.O.s (four with Bars), 54 O.B.E.s, 81 M.B.E.s, 5 M.C.s, 1,880 D.F.C.s (188 with Bars), 126 A.F.C.s, 10 C.G.M.s, 3 M.M.s, 401 D.F.M.s (two with Bars), 13 A.F.M.s, 20 George Medals, and 42 B.E.M.s, while 1,325 airmen were mentioned in dispatches.

FIRST OF R.A.A.F. IN ACTION

First of the R.A.A.F. to go into action was No. 10 Squadron, whose air crews went to Britain just prior to the war to take delivery of Sunderland Flying Boats to be ferried back to Australia. Instead, they stayed in the United Kingdom for five years to fight as a unit of R.A.F. Coastal Command.

First squadron to leave Australia for overseas operations
was No. 3 Squadron, which went to North Africa in 1940 and fought through the entire Mediterranean campaigns from Libya and Syria through to Italy.

In September, 1939, it was obvious that the British Empire must adopt a strategic defensive, to enable a planned expansion of armed forces and war industries to take place. When the time was ripe, she could change to the offensive. The British Empire Air Training Scheme, initiated by the Air Ministry, formed part of the planned expansion and Australia, in common with certain other Dominions, agreed to participate. Bold in its conception and designed to alleviate the inevitable congestion on aerodromes in the British Isles by making full use of the broad acres of the Dominions, the scheme aimed at producing an ever-increasing stream of air crew, ultimately swelling to a flood which would engulf the air power of our enemies. It was destined to achieve this aim.

When the Commonwealth Government accepted the Empire Air Training Scheme with all its complications, the role of the R.A.A.F. became two-fold; firstly, to proceed with the programme of expansion of the Home Defence Force, which now included re-arming of squadrons with modern aircraft, and secondly, to implement the air crew training scheme.

AIR TRAINING SCHEME THE GREATEST

The Empire Air Training Scheme was perhaps the greatest air organization and training effort of the Allies. It was originally planned for Canada to be the centre of all advanced training, but Australia considered that it would be unsound defence to have elementary training only in Australia, especially in relation to Japan’s war potential. Britain agreed with this view, and Australia set up its advanced flying training as well as the elementary schools. The scheme, scheduled to end in March, 1943, but extended to March, 1945, ultimately closed about nine months ahead of schedule when in June, 1944, the British Air Ministry was able to request the cessation of all operational drafts—the air war in Europe was drawing to a successful close.

AUSTRALIANS TOOK PART IN MAIN ATTACKS

Right through the war, the bonds between the R.A.F. and the R.A.A.F. were forged still closer, as Australians took part in all the main attacks over Germany, including the first “Thousand Bomber” raid and the famous opera-
tions against "The Dams". Our fighter pilots enhanced their reputations in the U.K., taking their place early against the Luftwaffe during the "Battle for Britain", later helping to smash German defences in Normandy in 1944 and tackling the flying bombs in 1945. They knew the cockpits of Spitfires, Hurricanes and all the popular and unpopular fighters produced by the Allies, and they knew the crew quarters of Halifaxes, Wellingtons and Lancasters.

Flight Sergeant R. H. Middleton won the V.C., but gave his life, in nursing a Stirling bomber back to England so that most of his crew could escape.

JAPAN ENTERS WAR

After the Japanese launched their first attacks in December, 1941, the Australian Cabinet approved a plan (March, 1942) to expand the R.A.A.F. to 73 squadrons. Under the original "Z" Plan of 1939, the R.A.A.F. expansion target had been set at 32 squadrons, but the entry of Japan into the war, and the emphasis this now placed on the Pacific arena, made vital expansion necessary to R.A.A.F. effectiveness. The lack of aircraft from overseas was becoming acute, even though it was hoped that Australian squadrons forming in 1943 would have Australian-made Beauforts and Boomerangs, and to those from 1944 onwards could be added the delivery of Beaufighters and Mosquitos.

Australia had four squadrons operating in Malaya in 1941, and their Hudsons, Wirraways and Buffaloes were immediately thrown into the war against the Japanese. Hudsons of No. 1 Bomber Squadron attacked Japanese transports off the east coast of Malaya before being forced to retire to the East Indies. No. 75 Squadron's Kittyhawks provided air cover for Moresby until U.S. fighters came to their aid, and although only one of the 25 Kittyhawks returned to Australia, the Japanese lost 40 aircraft. At Milne Bay, R.A.A.F. Kittyhawks inflicted the first serious setback experienced by the Japanese in an invasion attempt.

Australia's second V.C. of the 1939-1945 war was awarded posthumously to Flight Lieutenant W. E. Newton, who with great determination, led attacks with Boston aircraft against the Japanese along the north coast of New Guinea.

DRAIN ON AUSTRALIAN RESOURCES

As the Pacific war developed, the drain upon Australian resources was becoming more desperate and in October,
1943, the War Cabinet reviewed the Australian war effort, particularly in respect of manpower. As a result, a limit was placed upon the number of personnel, male or female, which could be recruited each month by the R.A.A.F. Cabinet stressed that henceforth the Australian military effort be concentrated as far as possible in the Pacific, and that the Commonwealth part in the E.A.T.S. should be related to the contemplated strength of the R.A.A.F. in the South-West Pacific area. At this time, the R.A.A.F. had 37 operational squadrons in existence, plus six transport squadrons. In addition, there were five reserve squadrons fully mobilized, also three R.A.F. and two Netherlands East Indies squadrons serving in Australia and two R.A.A.F. squadrons overseas.

In 1944, the situation was again reviewed, and Cabinet directed that quotas of service personnel must be released to civil industry. The R.A.A.F. was to reduce its force by 15,000.

FLOW OF AUSTRALIAN PLANES FROM FACTORIES

Meanwhile, from the Australian factories came Beaufort Bombers, Beaufighters, Boomerangs, Wirraways, and finally Mustangs and Mosquitos. The flow was helped by Spitfires from England, and Vultee Vengeance, Hudson, Catalina, Liberator and Mitchell bombers from America.

From North Australia and island bases, the R.A.A.F., along with its Allies, pressed home attacks against the Japanese in a mounting scale until, as the land forces mounted invasion after invasion, the R.A.A.F. forces bit deeper into the East Indies, Rabaul, Goodenough, Aitape, Morotai and Noemfoor. At the end, R.A.A.F. Liberators helped in the invasion of Borneo; R.A.A.F. Mosquitos photographed Japanese bases as far north as the Philippines; and R.A.A.F. Catalinas mined as far afield as Hong Kong harbour.

So for the R.A.A.F. ended the greatest, the most heroic, and yet, to thousands of bereaved Australians, the most tragic phase in its entire history. The total strength of the R.A.A.F. serving in the Pacific theatre was 131,662, including 14,589 officers, while the first-line aircraft strength was increased to 3,187.

OCCUPATION FORCE IN JAPAN

The end of the war certainly did not mean the end of overseas service for the R.A.A.F., and although the peacetime run-down of the Australian services was already in
motion, the R.A.A.F. was required immediately to contribute three squadrons of Mustang fighters, along with an Airfield Construction Squadron, Base and Maintenance Squadrons (all grouped under No. 81 Wing, R.A.A.F.) as part of the British Commonwealth occupation force in Japan. The Wing disbanded in November, 1948, leaving only No. 77 Squadron behind.

Meanwhile, the R.A.A.F., limited in manpower and especially limited in finances, quietly set about planning for the future. Very apparent was the difficulty of attracting sufficient highly skilled artisans from outside the service, so the R.A.A.F. decided to train its own technical personnel.

**FIRST APPRENTICE SCHEME**

In 1948, the first apprentice scheme was commenced at the R.A.A.F. School of Technical Training at Wagga, N.S.W. This has continued without interruption to provide a steady flow of keen, trained young men who form the technical backbone of the service. Earlier (1947) the R.A.A.F. College had been set up at Point Cook to provide a flow into the R.A.A.F. of young (General Duties) officers, who could, as they progressed into the service, provide a nucleus to fill command and staff appointments. The College has since grown into the R.A.A.F. Academy, whose cadets, under the auspices of the Melbourne University, graduate from the Academy with a degree in science.

The geographical area-command system, which had come into operation during the war, was dropped in favour of a functional command system during the appointment of Air Marshal Sir Donald Hardman, R.A.F., as Chief of Air Staff, R.A.A.F., in 1953-54. The three commands (Home, Training and Maintenance Commands), which were then instituted, were some five years later reduced to operational and support commands with greater responsibilities defined by the Department of Air.

**SERVICE IN KOREA AND MALAYA**

When the North Korean Army crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea on 25 June 1950, No. 77 Squadron was the first of the Allied squadrons to go into action alongside United States forces. The Mustangs were replaced by Gloster Meteors in 1951. No. 77 Squadron, from the beginning of the Korean War until July, 1953, carried out 4,836 missions, necessitating 18,872 sorties in which 42 pilots (including the first commanding officer, Wing Commander L. T. Spence) were lost.
The emergency in Malaya involved the R.A.A.F. in the jungle warfare against the Communist terrorists. Australia's contribution was No. 90 Wing. No. 38 Squadron's Dakotas were utilized in transport and supply dropping, and the Lincolns of No. 1 Squadron bombed the jungle hideouts of the terrorists. No. 1 Squadron returned to Australia nearly eight years later for re-arming, after dropping about 16,000 tons of bombs and flying over 3,000 sorties.

AUSTRALIAN BUILT PLANES

The R.A.A.F. ended World War II with Australian-built aircraft which already had been superseded, but the Australian factories had a large stake in the country, and it was clear that local production would be utilized wherever possible for the R.A.A.F.'s re-armament. This eventuated first with the Australian-built Vampire, which became the standard advanced trainer for the R.A.A.F. The Australian-built Lincolns were ultimately replaced with Canberras built in Australia. After lengthy investigations, the Sabre F86 was modified to take the Rolls Royce Avon engine to give the R.A.A.F. a fighter and ground attack weapon which in its heyday was the most effective aircraft in its role in the world.

BERLIN AIRLIFT

The R.A.A.F. was again operating beside the R.A.F. in the Berlin air lift. When the Russian blockade of September, 1948, threatened the peace of Europe, R.A.A.F. Dakotas of No. 86 Transport Wing flew more than 6,000 hours to move 7,700 passengers and 16,000,000 lb. of supplies.

In 1952, No. 78 (Fighter) Wing left Australia to commence two years of garrison duty alongside the R.A.F. at Malta. Its Vampires operated in exercises throughout the Mediterranean and represented the R.A.A.F. at the Coronation Review in Britain in 1953 and in exercises over Europe and North Africa.

MUTUAL SECURITY ON REGIONAL BASIS

The basic aim of Australia’s defence policy is to ensure its own security and that of its island territories. Because of the increased strength which comes from mutual security arrangements on a regional basis, Australia participates actively in A.N.Z.U.S., in S.E.A.T.O. and in British Commonwealth arrangements for defence co-opera-
tion. Our partners include countries within the area and our major Western allies who share our concern for the security of South-East Asia and are committed to its defence.

Control of the R.A.A.F. is exercised by the Air Board, and the R.A.A.F. is administered by two commands—Operational Command, containing all operational units, except those overseas (which come directly under Department of Air), and Support Command, comprising all supply, training, maintenance and administrative units which back up the operational force.

The role of the R.A.A.F. is in accordance with the Australian Government's defence policy, and this may be summarized: To provide an effective air offensive contribution in support of Allied operations and to provide an effective air defence of Australia and her territories.

**FUNCTIONAL COMMAND: OPERATIONAL MOBILITY**

The concept of functional command within the R.A.A.F. has been geared to the policy of operational mobility. The R.A.A.F. today is a readily available force effective within the limits of its equipment and capable of deployment at short notice. The operational component of the R.A.A.F. consists of a strike/reconnaissance element, an air defence element, an air transport element, a maritime reconnaissance element and a ground attack element. The units are equipped with F4E Phantoms, Canberra bombers, Mirage IIIO Interceptors and ground attack aircraft, Neptune maritime reconnaissance aircraft, with the world's finest maritime aircraft, the P3 Orion, replacing one of the Neptune squadrons in 1967, Hercules C130As and C130Es, Caribou and HS748 transports. In addition, Bell Iroquois helicopters for close army support fill an important role in the R.A.A.F.'s impressive inventory.

**A DECADE OF VAST RE-EQUIPMENT**

The 1960's must be recorded by future R.A.A.F. historians as a decade of vast re-equipment. Never before has the R.A.A.F. had to absorb such a variety of sophisticated and costly equipments. The training of the men to fly the aircraft and the technicians to maintain the equipments has placed a heavy burden on the R.A.A.F., but in keeping with the Air Force’s tradition the big job is being done well.

In South Vietnam, the R.A.A.F. has three squadrons—
No. 35 Caribou Squadron ("The Wallaby Airline") and No. 9 Iroquois Helicopter Squadron, both at Vung Tau, and No. 2 Canberra Bomber Squadron at Phan Rang.

EXTENSIVE TECHNICAL SERVICES

The need for rapid deployment over long distances requires that the R.A.A.F.'s logistic support must be as flexible as possible, and that there must be an extensive technical service in support. To this end, maintenance squadrons are established to direct support for the operational squadrons and training units, while major servicing is undertaken by two aircraft depots of the Air Force, or by civil manufacturing and repair organizations. As with the technical elements, the equipment requirements of the R.A.A.F. are met in the first instance at unit level, backed up by base stores. Bulk stocks are held at three major stores depots. Electronic data processing is in use within the R.A.A.F., which was the first of the Australian armed services to introduce the system.

MODERN AIRFIELDS A LASTING MEMORIAL

The war, especially in the Pacific, emphasised the need for adequate airfields. R.A.A.F. Airfield Construction Squadrons and works units built a lasting memorial to their industriousness and courage in landing strips still remaining throughout the islands and in Australia itself. The modern airfields at Darwin, Cocos Island and Butterworth are post-war tributes to the skill and application of R.A.A.F. works personnel. A second airfield has been built for Australia's Far North (at Tindal, near Katherine, Northern Territory).

The increased complexity of modern aircraft and their weapons systems has created a greater demand for manpower with higher skills.

SERVICE TRAINING STEPPED UP

Service training has had to be stepped up, as only a very small percentage of those entering the service have top trade proficiency. It is in this field that the dividends of the early introduction of R.A.A.F. trade training are now being reaped. Recruiting for the R.A.A.F remains high, and the training facilities available within the service ensure that there is no interruption in the flow of trained men.

The greatest item of immediate national significance concerning the R.A.A.F. is that today it has entered the "Supersonic Era".
R.A.A.F. ENTERS “SUPersonic Era”

In some respects, this is just another chapter in history—when iron-clad soldiers raised their shields against the boiling water poured over the castle battlements, they were merely demonstrating the endlessly changing needs of defence against an enemy. Nevertheless, the “Supersonic era” of the R.A.A.F. cannot be dismissed lightly, for just as the introduction in 1963 of the Bristol Bloodhound S.A.M. (Surface to Air Missile) gave the R.A.A.F. its first opportunity for training in elementary missilry, so now with Mach 2 Aircraft, its pilots and technical personnel have passed another milestone in the military art. Along with the introduction of the Mirage must now be taken the Australian Government’s decision to replace the Canberra with the American F-111 and, in the training role, the Winjeels and Vampires with the Macchi Jet.

TWO FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE AIR FORCE

An effective Air Force must take account of two factors. Firstly, it must always be ready at any moment to give a good account of itself, with the arms at its disposal, and secondly, it must always be in touch with the advances in military science and planning to utilize them to the best advantage if they become available.

History has recorded the ability of the R.A.A.F. to give a good account of itself since its inception. Active operations in Korea and Malaya, and operational exercises throughout the world as well as in Australia, provide evidence of this continuing tradition.

FORWARD LOOKING APPROACH

The speed at which new equipment can be introduced and operational effectiveness obtained depends on so many factors—finance, recruiting, training, etc.—before they have an influential effect on capabilities. In R.A.A.F. planning, there is ample evidence of a forward-looking approach. In the introduction of its aircraft, in new support equipment, in electronic data processing, the R.A.A.F. has shown itself forward-looking and adventurous.

And so the story continues. The R.A.A.F. has won honour as a national air force in major conflicts and has been capable of quick and effective action in smaller engagements.

PROUD TRADITION OF “PER ARDUA AD ASTRA”

The R.A.A.F. has taken part in Antarctic research ex-
peditions; it has been active in planning and in operational exercises with Australian treaty forces in South-East Asia and in the Pacific; it has represented the Australian people during independence celebrations of the emerging States of Africa; it has assisted America in space research efforts. In short, it has been a relatively small, but very active, air force in an age of air and space development previously undreamed of.

The R.A.A.F. today takes pride in its service. It has a history of endeavour and sacrifice which has won it a place in the hearts of all Australians and a position of respect among the armed services of Australia’s Allies. The R.A.A.F. today will not tarnish this record, but will carry on in the tradition—“Per Ardua Ad Astra”.