

**SPEECH BY CHIEF OF AIR FORCE
AIR MARSHAL GEOFFREY BROWN, AO AT THE
WORIMI HORNET UNVEILING
AVALON, 24 FEBRUARY 2015**

Thank you Lisa. I'd like to acknowledge the Wathaurong (*pronounced Watha Wurrung*) people as the traditional owners of this part of Australia and I pay my respects to their elders past and present.

I also want to acknowledge the presence of a few very special guests. The first is our Air Force Elder, Uncle Harry Allie. Can I just say Harry that it greatly encouraged me to hear you speak so positively about the progress that you have witnessed over quite a few decades between Air Force and Defence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

The next two people I'd like to acknowledge are Worimi (*pronounced Worry-my*) Elders, Uncles Neville Lilley and John Ridgeway. I'm also very pleased to see that we have here today two family members of one of our first Aboriginal aviators – and our first known Aboriginal fighter pilot – Warrant Officer Len Waters. Len's brother Kevin Waters has travelled from St George in central Queensland, and Kevin's son Glen has come from Toowoomba. Welcome gentlemen.

The airshow this year is framed to pay tribute to the spirit of Anzac and to the heroes of military aviation. That's particularly relevant because this year marks the Centenary of Gallipoli. And, given that the official headline for the show is 'Heroes of the Sky', it is fitting that we will honour an Aboriginal role model like Warrant Officer Len Waters here today.

It is an Air Force tradition to have a pilot's name painted onto the side of our aircraft. On this particular aircraft, I'm pleased to say that we have permission from Len Waters' family to have his memory honoured in this way.

Len's family has links to Aboriginal people in NSW and Victoria. He joined the RAAF in 1942, volunteering for flying service in 1943. Lisa recently flagged an interesting quote from Len in a book called *Black Diggers*. He said....

'I was terribly keen to prove myself in the elite ... The flying part of the Air Force was the elite. I might add that there were 375 [students] on that course and 48 of us finished up as pilots...and the end result when we got our wings...there were only three blokes ahead of me on average.'

Len was a leader in every sense of the word. He was a true pioneer. He conducted 95 ground attacks and fighter sweeps over Japanese held positions in what was then New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies in 1944 and 1945.

I hope that if he was here today, he would be honoured by the artwork that has been chosen. The artwork featured was designed by Balarinji, established by John and Ros Moriarty. While some of you might not immediately recognise the name Balarinji, they are perhaps best known to the broader public for their artwork on the Qantas

fleet. I would quickly like to congratulate the Moriarty's for being inducted into the Design Institute of Australia Hall of Fame in May last year.

The artwork on the aircraft is called Kilyarr Kilyarr, depicting the wedge-tailed eagle with its line of sight set on a strike. This idea was immediately attractive to Air Force people because the eagle is a powerful bird which dominates the skies over Australian land and seascapes.

Eagle symbology is also a prominent part of our Air Force culture. The streak of dotted lines on the fuselage tracks the eagle's flight with a sense of speed that mirrors the Hornet itself. The curved circles around the tail image and cockpit reflect a camping place, where clans people gather to rest, share stories and pass knowledge down from generation to generation.

From today on, with the permission of the Worimi People, this aircraft will be known as the Worimi Hornet. For those that may not be aware, the Worimi are the traditional owners of the Port Stephens area in NSW where RAAF Base Williamtown and this Hornet is located, and after which we have named the aircraft.

The Worimi Hornet is an F/A-18A Hornet, which like our whole fleet, is celebrating its 30th birthday this year. The Worimi Hornet has served with all four Hornet squadrons, that is the No 2 Operational Conversion Unit and Nos 3, 75 and 77 Squadrons.

Air Force is actively seeking to develop strong relationships with the traditional owners on whose lands our airbases are established right around Australia, and I am happy to say that, among others, we are developing a strong relationship with the Worimi people. One thing we do not want is for local traditional owners and their children to be wondering what goes on behind the wire of our boundary fences.

I'm delighted to see here today the young men and women from the ADF's Indigenous Pre-Recruitment Course, who provide tremendous potential for the future. I see bright, strong, vital young men and women who are on a path to a very rewarding career in Navy, Army or Air Force. It is my hope that some of you will go on to play an important part in the future of the Air Force and help build further relationships with traditional owners around Australia on behalf of the Air Force.

The Worimi Hornet will be on display here at Avalon for the rest of the week. It is my hope that here at Avalon, and thereafter, it will become a strong message that Air Force, and Defence more broadly, are actively seeking to embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and contribution to this Country.

I'm pleased to say that Air Force has made good progress in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs over the past 18 months or so.

- We have significantly increased our numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- We have established a small Air Force specific Indigenous Affairs team lead by Lisa.
- We have our Air Force Elder in Uncle Harry Allie.

- We continue to deliver our RAAF Indigenous Youth Programs, notably with support from Uncle Neville Lilley's family.
- We actively celebrate NAIDOC Week and have established an Air Force-specific NAIDOC Award for exemplary service to Indigenous Affairs.
- Finally, we are looking to deliver Air Force specific Pre-Recruitment Courses in 2015 and beyond.

Before I close, I just want to thank the team from my Personnel area, Defence Indigenous Affairs, Balarinji, the Waters' family and the Worimi People who worked so hard to make this idea a reality.

Well done all.