

**SPEECH BY
CHIEF OF AIR FORCE
AIR MARSHAL LEO DAVIES, AO, CSC
UNVEILING OF THE SPITFIRE DISPLAY
RAAF MUSEUM, RAAF BASE WILLIAMS
16 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining me here today at the official unveiling of the latest acquisition by the RAAF Museum.

It seems very fitting that today we acknowledge the inclusion of this outstanding reproduction of the Supermarine Spitfire into our collection. Over the coming weekend, Australia will be marking the National Commemoration of the Battle of Britain with our focus in Hobart. The Spitfire's role in that battle turned an already outstanding aircraft into an iconic symbol of air power.

Importantly for the RAAF Museum and the local RAAF Williams community, this particular aircraft is reproduced in the colours and markings of No 79 Squadron. This squadron was raised and formed just down the road at RAAF Base Laverton on 26 April 1943. Equipped from its very inception with the Spitfire, No 79 Squadron served in the air defence roles over the north east coast of New Guinea and the Northern Territory.

By war's end, No 79 Squadron had been re-equipped with the potent Mk VIII Spitfire you see on display here today, and had deployed to Morotai in the Indonesian archipelago. From this advanced base, the squadron conducted aggressive ground and maritime-strike missions—tasks never envisioned for this thoroughbred fighter when it was first designed. It is a testament to the versatility of the aircraft and the dedication of the ground and air crews that the Spitfire could be so readily turned into a flexible, multi-role platform.

Being able to put such an important symbol of Australia's wartime experience on display would not have been possible without the efforts and financial support of several groups. I would like to publically acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Friends of the Museum Group who worked extremely hard to get this project through to completion. Thankyou.

I would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support of Rolls Royce, and Rolls Royce's continuing support of our Air Force aircraft engines across the fleet. I would also like to thank the RAAF Association and the many other donors who have given so willingly to fund this Spitfire project.

Displaying our heritage does not just happen; it takes the professionalism of people such as Dave Gardner and the staff of the RAAF Museum to maintain the institutions necessary to house our historical collections. Our museum is growing and reflecting the significant part Air Force has played in our military history. This Spitfire is one more piece, one more story, one more reason to visit the RAAF Museum here at Point Cook—the home of the Royal Australian Air Force.

[After Rolls-Royce and Friends of the Museum addresses....]

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my honour and privilege to declare this display open.

Thank you.