

RAAF Diploma/Engineer Cadet Squadron. Frognall, 1962 - 1986

On the 1st October, 1962, the Diploma Cadet Squadron (DCS), which was previously known as School of Radio Detachment A was formed at Frognall. There were 40 tech cadets enrolled.

Trainees undertook academic training at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and later at the Swinburne College of Technology and also at the Caulfield Institute of Technology. To gain practical experience, cadets visited RAAF bases at Edinburgh, Amberley and Williamstown and units such as the Aircraft Research and Development Unit. To gain further experience, visits were arranged to civilian organisations, including General Motors Holden, H.J. Heinz and Company, Shell Oil Company, Australian Paper Manufacturers, Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and Trans Australia Airlines.



When not pursuing their studies at RMIT, cadets were given instruction in a range of service and military matters such as Administration, Ground Defence, Drill and Ceremonial, English, Public Speaking and Social Training and to develop character and initiative, they participated in many different sports, including AFL, rugby union, hockey, tennis, etc. Adventure training, for example canoe trips on the Goulburn River, and car trials, were also made available and were well attended.

Cadets were successful academically as well. Air Cadets Harry Detjen [1962] (right), CA. Twine [1963] and C.J. Knowles [1964] each won the Sir Ernest Fiske prize, one of two prizes awarded annually by the Institute of Radio Engineers of Australia, for the most outstanding communications engineering students.



In January 1965 Frognall ceased to be a training centre exclusively for future officers of the Technical Branch. In that month it also became home for six cadets recruited directly from civilian life to begin a three-year associate diploma course in commerce subjects at RMIT, with the aim of taking up commissions in the Equipment Branch upon graduation. In recognition of the growing importance of the DCS, the CO's post was upgraded at this point to Wing Commander rank and additional staff members were posted to Frognall and in April 1971 Pilot Officer C.D. Conran became the first member to graduate with a Diploma in Business Studies. Although these were milestones which gave the program an apparent air of success, in reality there were some features which were distinctly less than satisfactory. Foremost among these was a very high failure rate which meant that only about one-third to a half of those cadets destined for the Equipment Branch were actually graduating and usually taking longer to do so.

The result of this situation was that during February 1971 a sub-unit of DCS called 'Detachment A' was formed at Toowoomba in Southern Queensland. The three students enlisted into this element undertook a course in business studies at the Queensland Institute of Technology, Darling Downs (retitled the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education in December 1971), while living at and being administered from the No. 7 Stores Depot at nearby North Drayton. Two of them were offered an exemption on first-year subjects, while the third (the son of the CO of 7SD) was already a student at the Institute who subsequently joined the RAAF. Under this arrangement the first class of the new detachment were enabled to complete the four-year diploma course in just three years.

The maintenance of the cadet flight at Toowoomba as a detachment of DCS was an arrangement continued until 24 October 1973, when full functional control of these cadets was transferred to 7SD and all connection with Frognall ended. Removal of the Toowoomba detachment from the DCS strength figures saw the number of cadets drop from 134 in February 1973 to 107 a year later, and for the rest of the 1970s the size of new intakes kept the squadron's starting strength each year averaging between 95 and 110. The number of graduates produced annually from a student pool of this size varied from the late 1960s until 1976 between 22 and 27, with only 1971 standing out as the exception with 35 graduates. Thereafter the number declined to around 15-17, which was the same level which prevailed up to 1968

Early on, there was a lot of dissatisfaction in the physical environment at Frognall, stemming primarily from use of the old wartime huts as sub-standard accommodation and it wasn't until July 1971 that new living quarters were completed enabling cadets to have their own individual rooms instead of being accommodated four to a room.



In December 1976, the Melbourne Telecommunication Unit, which had operated from Frognall since 1942, was disbanded and DCS became the sole occupier of the site, at the same time, changing its name to the Engineer Cadet Squadron (ECS). This was necessitated because RMIT discontinued the Diploma course as the the Institute of Engineers of Australia decided not to recognise holders of a Diploma received after 1980. Instead, graduating cadets were now to receive a degree and would be commissioned with the rank of Flying Officer. Diploma graduates were commissioned with the rank of Pilot Officer.

The base at Frognall closed down in March 1986 and was sold by the Commonwealth a short time later. A scheme which provided the RAAF with graduate engineer officers for 25 years closed on this day after a graduation parade at Frognall, in the Melbourne suburb of Canterbury, reviewed by the Air Officer Commanding Support Command, Air Vice-Marshal Peter Scully. From its beginnings in February 1961 as 'Detachment A' of the Radio Apprentice School, then Diploma

Cadet Squadron from 1962, and Engineer Cadet Squadron (ECS) from 1976, the unit administered officer cadets who were studying for engineering diplomas and degrees at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. From 1965 Frognall was also home to cadets studying Commerce at RMIT before becoming officers in the Equipment Branch, an arrangement which ended in 1973.

With the closure of the ECS, future intakes of RAAF engineer students attended the new Australian Defence Force Academy.

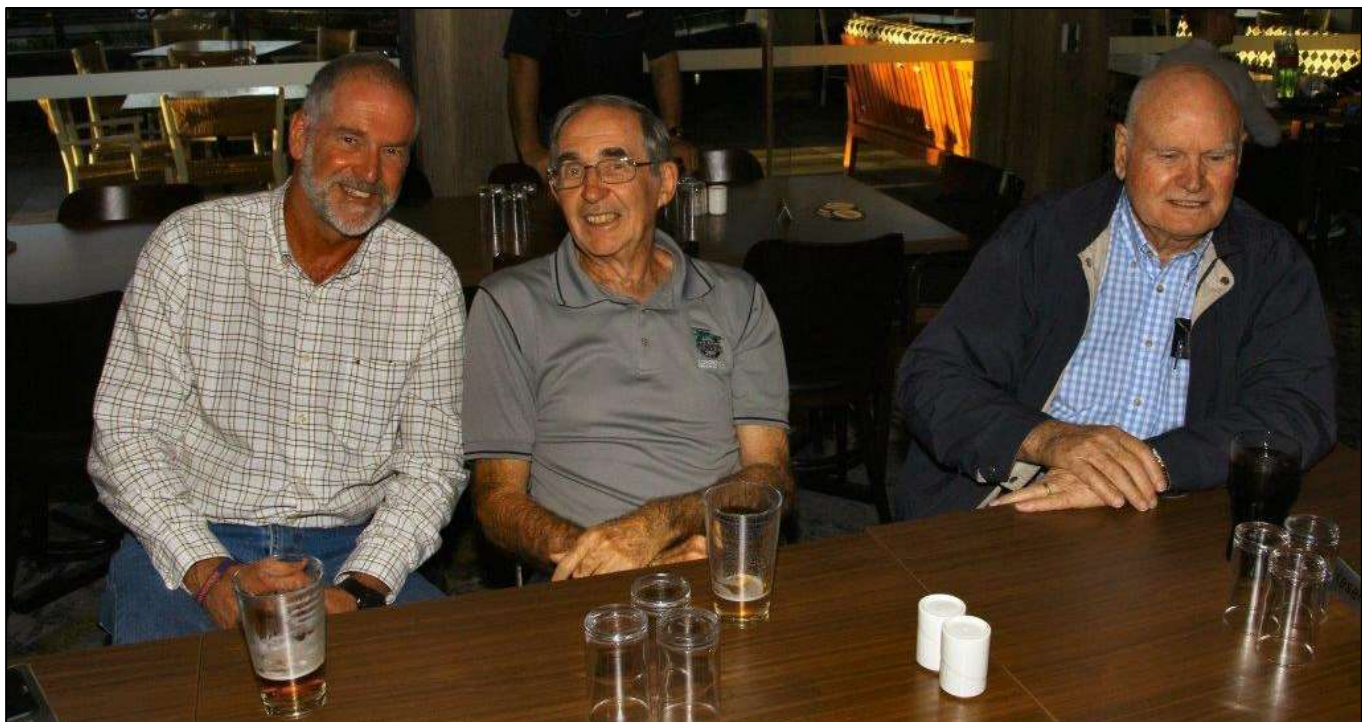
Politicians are people who, when they see light at the end of the tunnel,
go out and buy some more tunnel.

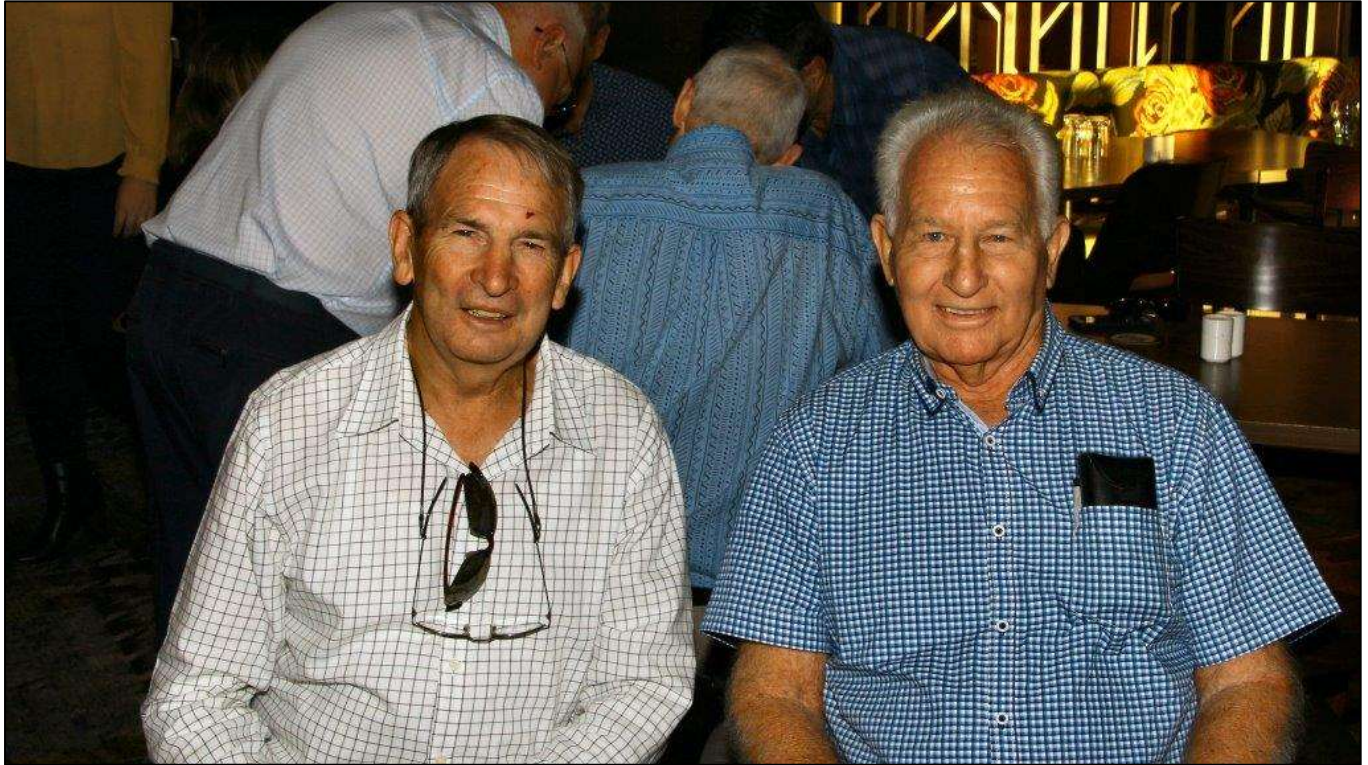
Over the two days, Wednesday 27Mar and Thursday 28Mar19, the Ex-Froggers DCS/ECS people held a function in Canberra, at the Ainslie Football and Social Club. On the Wednesday they held an impromptu “meet and greet” get together in the down-stairs area and on the Thursday night it was a “couth and culture” sit-down dinner event in the up-stairs function room.



Those two days coincided with the 98th year anniversary of the formation of the RAAF so there was a double reason to celebrate.

The following were some of those who braved the Wed afternoon:







On the Thursday night, the ladies all frocked up, the gents polished the boots, combed the hair, generously applied the Old Spice and with their lovely ladies on the arm, made their way in an orderly fashion, some via the stairs, most by the lift, to the Ainslie Football and Social Club's first floor function room.

MC for the evening was Chris Crowley who had absolutely no idea how he was going to get through the night, maintain decorum and allow the function to conclude without being raided at least once by the ACT Police.





Gate keeper for the evening's event was Dave Beattie (22), ably assisted by his lovely daughter Rebekah.



The room as she was early in the evening.



With the troops seated.



Anker Brodersen (27), Lee Stanley (27), David (27) and Meg Leaney.



Ben Morris (23), Axel Augustein (24), Graeme Stark (24)



David Ball (26), Nick Maill, (26), Colin Thorne (26), Ingrid Zlabur, Helen Thorne.



Des Tromandanous, Jenny Fantini (23) Jenny was the RAAF's first female engineer graduate.



Seated: Des Tromandanous, Jenny Fantini (23), Ted Heskett (WOD 78 – 81), George Breen (23), Ken Roberts (23), Oi. **Standing:** “Bill” Hayden (23), Glenn Evans (23), Bradley Grey (23).



Fay Murphy, Sue Penna, Gwen MacDonald.



Front: Rino Carrera (26), Nicol Maill (26), Col Thorne (26), Gary March (26), **Standing:** John Gallant (26), David Ball (26), Tim Malone (26), Peter Johnson (26), Michael Wilkington (26)



Helen and Ralph (12) Waters, Frank (12) and Lydia Grimshaw, Rus Garaway (14)



When the beer began to flow, Harry Detjen gave everyone absolution and absolved them from their pledges of abstinence.



Jodi Steel (29), Julie Peterson (29).



John and Judy Webster (RAAFA ACT)



John Hulbert (2), Max Flint (2)



Kev Walker (24), Peter Bright (24)



Leigh Gordon (27), Chris Castles (27), Peter Johnson (27), Tim Malone (27)



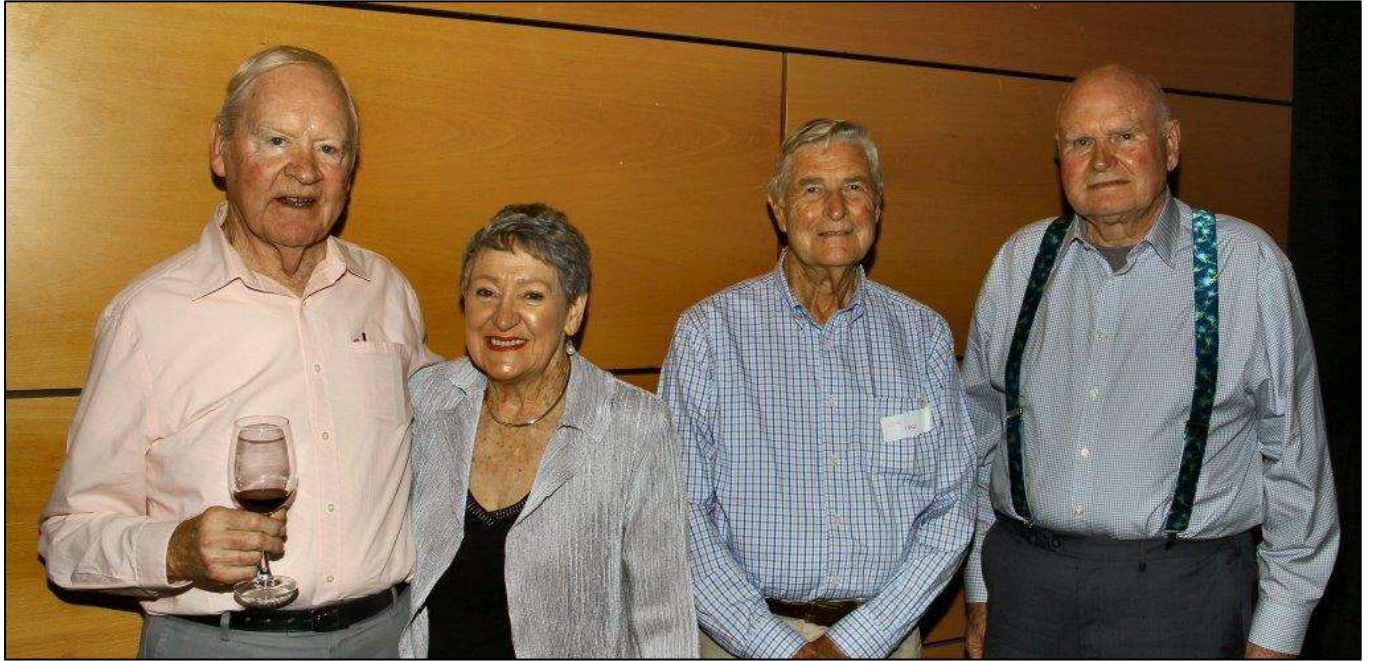
Lynne and Keith (15) Russell, Gail and Dick (15) Powell.



Max Lack laying the law down – “Now listen, the word is there will be no dancing on tables!!”



Meg Leaney, Adele Gordon



Merv McDougall (2), Barbara Lowery, Chris Beatty (1), Keith Johnson (1)

Michael Walkington (26), - see, I go to the gym at least once a year. It shows!!





Seated: Carol Millington, Maurice Kissane (19), Steve Millington (19), Stuart Garrett (19), Max Back (19). **Standing:** Pam and Graham (19) Wallace, Phil Campbell (19), Jill Garrett



Seated: Joy Rickert, Denise Dudman, Lorraine Gentle, **Standing:** Glenys Bickle, Gillian Giles.



Michael Walkington (26), Tony Burt (26), John Gallant (26), Angie Gallant, Rino Carrera (26)



Steve Rampant (25), Mal Benfer (25), Steve Ranson (25), Lyndon Tilbrook (25), Darcy Brooker (25)



Trevor Sutherland (17), Ken Thomson (17), Neil Kennedy (17), Greg Donaldson (17), Brian Cather (17), Dave Stanfield (17)



Wendy Kennedy, Barbara Cather, Nicole Stanfield.



Front: Anthony King (30), Tracey Judd (30) Matt Gollings (30), Greg Hoffman (30), Mark French (30). **Rear:** Scott Miller (30), Greg Curr (30), Nico Padovan (30), Steve Bray (30), Mark Scougall (30), Adrian Carswell (30), Michael Kulh (30).



Course 1 table.



Course 13 table.



Course 13



Course 22 table



Course 27 table



Course 28 table.



Course 28

If you had to choose between drinking wine every day or being skinny
which would you choose? – red or white?