# = Southern Area Command ( RAAF ) =

Southern Area Command was one of several geographically based commands raised by the Royal Australian Air Force ( RAAF ) during World War II . It was formed in March 1940 , and initially controlled units based in Victoria , Tasmania , South Australia and southern New South Wales . Headquartered at Melbourne , Southern Area Command was primarily responsible for air defence , aerial reconnaissance and protection of the sea lanes within its boundaries . From 1942 its operational responsibilities excluded New South Wales . The area continued to operate following the end of the war , before being re @-@ formed in October 1953 as Training Command under the RAAF 's new functional command @-@ and @-@ control system .

## = = History = =

### = = = World War II = = =

Prior to World War II , the Royal Australian Air Force was small enough for all its elements to be directly controlled by RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne . After war broke out in September 1939 , the RAAF began to decentralise its command structure , commensurate with expected increases in manpower and units . Its initial move in this direction was to create Nos. 1 and 2 Groups to control units in Victoria and New South Wales , respectively . Then , between March 1940 and May 1941 , the RAAF divided Australia and New Guinea into four geographically based command @-@ and @-@ control zones : Central Area , Southern Area , Western Area , and Northern Area . The roles of these area commands were air defence , protection of adjacent sea lanes , and aerial reconnaissance . Each was led by an Air Officer Commanding ( AOC ) responsible for the administration and operations of all air bases and units within his boundary .

No. 1 Group , which had been established on 20 November 1939 , was re @-@ formed as one of the first two area commands , Southern Area , on 7 March 1940 . Headquartered in Melbourne , Southern Area Command was given control of all Air Force units in Victoria , Tasmania , South Australia and the southern Riverina district of New South Wales . Its inaugural AOC was Air Commodore Henry Wrigley , who had also led No. 1 Group . His senior administrative staff officer was Group Captain Joe Hewitt . Wrigley handed over command to Air Commodore Adrian " King " Cole , formerly AOC Central Area , in November 1940 .

By August 1941 , the RAAF 's expanding instructional program necessitated the establishment of overarching training organisations on a semi @-@ functional , semi @-@ geographical basis . Accordingly , on 2 August 1941 , No. 1 ( Training ) Group was formed in Melbourne to assume responsibility for training units within Southern Area 's boundaries , while No. 2 ( Training ) Group was formed in Sydney to take over training units then under Central Area , which was disbanded ; control of other Central Area units was " divided as convenient " between Southern and Northern Area Commands . Air Commodore Frank Bladin held command of Southern Area from September to December 1941 .

As of 20 April 1942 , operational authority over all RAAF combat infrastructure , including area commands , was invested in the newly established Allied Air Forces ( AAF ) Headquarters under South West Pacific Area Command ( SWPA ) . On 15 May , Southern Area , which by then was considered too large , yielded responsibility for operational and maintenance units within New South Wales to a new area command , Eastern Area . Control of maintenance units under Southern Area was transferred to the newly established No. 4 ( Maintenance ) Group in Melbourne on 14 September . September also saw the formation of RAAF Command , led by Air Vice Marshal Bill Bostock , to oversee the majority of Australian flying units in the SWPA . Bostock exercised control of air operations through the area commands , although RAAF Headquarters continued to hold overarching administrative authority over Australian units .

By April 1943 , Southern Area was operating two combat units : No. 67 Squadron , flying maritime reconnaissance and anti @-@ submarine missions with Avro Ansons out of RAAF Station Laverton

, Victoria ; and No. 86 Squadron , flying P @-@ 40 Kittyhawk fighters from Gawler , South Australia . Group Captain Ian McLachlan commanded the area from March 1944 until January 1945 , when he handed over to Group Captain Charles Eaton . The German submarine U @-@ 862 operated off southern Australia during the first months of 1945 , and the few combat units in Southern Area were heavily engaged in anti @-@ submarine patrols , attempting unsuccessfully to locate this and any other U @-@ boats in the vicinity . Eaton led the command through to the surrender of Japan in September , and into December 1945 .

### Post @-@ war reorganisation

Following the end of the Pacific War in August 1945 , SWPA was dissolved and RAAF Headquarters again assumed full control of all its operational formations , including the area commands . In September 1946 , the Chief of the Air Staff , Air Vice Marshal George Jones , proposed reducing the five extant mainland area commands ( North @-@ Western , North @-@ Eastern , Eastern , Southern , and Western Areas ) to three : Northern Area , covering Queensland and the Northern Territory ; Eastern Area , covering New South Wales ; and Southern Area , covering Western Australia , South Australia , Victoria and Tasmania . The proposal was part of a much larger plan to restructure the post @-@ war RAAF ; the Federal government rejected the plan and the wartime area command boundaries essentially remained in place . RAAF College ( which became RAAF Academy in 1961 ) was established at RAAF Station Point Cook , Victoria , under Southern Area Command in August 1947 . The area 's later AOCs included Air Commodores Allan Walters , during 1948 ? 50 , and Alan Charlesworth , the last officer to command the area , during 1951 ? 53 .
The Federal government retired Jones in 1952 and replaced him with Air Marshal Donald Hardman , RAF , who proceeded to re @-@ organise the RAAF command @-@ and @-@ control system along functional lines , establishing Home ( operational ) , Training , and Maintenance Commands . The first was re @-@ formed from the existing Eastern Area Command , which was considered a de facto operational organisation owing to the preponderance of combat forces within its sphere . The second was re @-@ formed from Southern Area Command , as it was already the hub of training services , controlling those in New South Wales and Queensland as well as Victoria and South Australia . The third and final functional command was formed from the extant Maintenance Group headquarters in Melbourne . The transition to a functional system was completed in February 1954 , when the three new commands assumed control of all operations , training and maintenance from Western , North @-@ Western , and North @-@ Eastern Area Commands .

## Aftermath

The functional commands established in 1953 ? 54 were revised in 1959 . Home Command was renamed Operational Command , and Training and Maintenance Commands merged to become Support Command . Operational Command was renamed Air Command in 1987 , and three years later Support Command split into Logistics Command and Training Command . Training Command was re @-@ formed as Air Force Training Group , a force element group under Air Command , in 2006 .

## Order of battle

As at 30 April 1942 , Southern Area 's order of battle comprised :