

= Neville McNamara =

Air Chief Marshal Sir Neville Patrick McNamara , KBE , AO , AFC , AE (17 April 1923 ? 7 May 2014) was a senior commander of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . He served as Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) , the RAAF 's highest @-@ ranking position , from 1979 until 1982 , and as Chief of the Defence Force Staff (CDFS) , Australia 's top military role at the time , from 1982 until 1984 . He was the second RAAF officer to hold the rank of air chief marshal .

Born in Queensland , McNamara joined the RAAF during World War II and saw action in the South West Pacific , flying P @-@ 40 Kittyhawks . He also flew combat missions in Gloster Meteors during the Korean War . In 1961 , he was awarded the Air Force Cross for his leadership of No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit . He gained further operational experience heading the RAAF presence in Ubon , Thailand , in the late 1960s . Promoted to air commodore , McNamara was Commander RAAF Forces Vietnam , and Deputy Commander Australian Forces Vietnam , in 1971 ? 72 , for which he was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire . As Deputy Chief of the Air Staff in 1976 , he was named an Officer of the Order of Australia . Knighted while CAS in 1980 , he retired after completing his term as CDFS in 1984 .

= = Early life and World War II = =

Neville Patrick McNamara was born on 17 April 1923 in Toogoolawah , Queensland . He was educated at Toogoolawah State School , and by the Christian Brothers in Warwick and at St. Joseph 's Nudgee College . He enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on 12 October 1941 . Following aircrew training , he graduated as a sergeant pilot on 15 October 1942 . He served as an instructor before being posted to the South West Pacific as a fighter pilot with No. 75 Squadron , flying P @-@ 40 Kittyhawks . He gained his commission in 1944 .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

= = = Rise to senior command = = =

After the war , McNamara was posted to air traffic control duties at Headquarters North @-@ Eastern Area . During 1947 , he was stationed at Bofu , Japan , with No. 82 Squadron , as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) . He married Dorothy Miller on 27 May 1950 ; the couple had two daughters . From 1951 to 1953 , he served as an instructor at Central Flying School in East Sale , Victoria . Ranked squadron leader , he then saw operational service in the Korean War as the Executive Officer of No. 77 Squadron , flying Gloster Meteors . Initially employed in the conflict as a fighter unit , by this time No. 77 Squadron 's role was primarily ground attack , using the Meteors ' cannon augmented by newly fitted rocket armament . McNamara briefly took charge of the unit in November ? December when there was a hiatus between commanding officers rotating out and rotating in .

Returning to Australia in 1954 , McNamara was posted to Headquarters Training Command as pilot training officer . From 1955 until 1957 he served as staff officer fighter operations at the Department of Air , before being appointed Commanding Officer No. 25 Squadron . Promoted wing commander , he took charge of No. 2 Operational Conversion Unit (No. 2 OCU) at RAAF Base Williamtown , New South Wales in 1959 . No. 2 OCU was responsible for training pilots to fly the CAC Sabre jet fighter , which was operated by Nos. 3 , 75 and 77 Squadrons . His performance as commanding officer earned him the Air Force Cross in the 1961 Queen 's Birthday Honours .

In 1961 McNamara was posted to England as senior air staff officer at RAAF Overseas Headquarters , London , and then in 1964 was appointed Director of Personnel (Officers) at the Department of Air . He received the Air Efficiency Award in 1965 , and the following year took command of RAAF Ubon , Thailand . Operating under the provisions of the SEATO agreement during the early years of the Vietnam War , the Australian contingent included No. 79 Squadron ,

flying Sidewinder @-@ equipped CAC Sabres . Although only fifty kilometres from the Laotian border and occasionally scrambled to intercept North Vietnamese fighters , the Sabres never saw action , in contrast to their USAF brethren also based at Ubon . Limited as its military role was , however , the RAAF presence was judged politically valuable . After completing his tour in Thailand , McNamara served as air staff officer at RAAF Base Richmond , New South Wales , until 1968 , before being appointed Director General Organisation at the Department of Air .

= = = Senior RAAF and Australian Defence Force command = = =

Promoted to air commodore , in April 1971 , McNamara became the last Commander RAAF Forces Vietnam and Deputy Commander Australian Force Vietnam (AFV) . Believing that the Air Force paid " lip service " to its army co @-@ operation responsibilities in the 1950s and 1960s , he familiarised himself with the finer points of air / ground operations by accompanying No. 9 Squadron helicopters on missions supporting 1st Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy Province . Given the responsibility of overseeing the withdrawal of the RAAF from Vietnam in 1972 , McNamara was praised for his " wise and patient counsel , devotion to duty and firm control " , leading to his appointment as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in September that year . In 1973 , he was posted to the United States as the Australian Air Attache to Washington , D.C. Promoted to air vice marshal , he returned to Australia in 1975 and took up duties as the Deputy Chief of Air Staff , which he later described as " an invaluable learning experience for the top job " . He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) on 7 June 1976 for " distinguished service in responsible positions " .

McNamara was promoted to air marshal and became Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) in March 1979 . He succeeded Air Marshal Sir James Rowland , who had been the first CAS to personally command the RAAF in a legal sense , following the abolition of the Australian Air Board in 1976 . Previously , the CAS position was more akin to a chairman , " first among equals " with the other members of the Air Board . Under this earlier arrangement , McNamara considered that some senior commanders tended to behave like " regional war lords " who thought that the CAS existed purely to handle politicians and paperwork , while they (the commanders) got on with the Air Force 's " real work " . As CAS , McNamara put in train development of new strategies for the air defence of Australia , later remarking that " capability must be matched by ideas " . He also supervised the selection process that chose the F / A @-@ 18 Hornet to replace the RAAF 's Mirage III fighters . McNamara personally favoured the F / A @-@ 18 due to its multi @-@ role capability . Appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) on 31 December 1980 , he was the last CAS to be knighted before Australia abandoned the imperial honours system .

In 1982 , McNamara became the first Air Force member to directly command all three of Australia 's armed services as Chief of the Defence Force Staff (CDFS) , which had replaced the earlier senior position in the defence force , Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee . He also became only the second RAAF officer to be raised to the rank of air chief marshal . As CDFS , McNamara had to work to repair strained relations between the Defence Department 's military and civilian components . He sought to accomplish this through a restrained management style and respect for the department 's public servants . At the same time , he maintained the need for military and civilian personnel to be easily distinguishable , and reversed a trend for armed force personnel to wear suits " in the office " and uniforms only " on parade " , which was the preference of Secretary of Defence Arthur Tange . The military and public service wings of the department still clashed over the question of enlarging the CDFS 's role to achieve more coherent defence planning . Shortly after McNamara completed his term as CDFS in 1984 , the position was redesignated Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) , to more clearly reflect its authority over the Australian armed services .

= = Retirement = =

Air Chief Marshal McNamara retired from military life in April 1984 . He was awarded the Centenary Medal on 1 January 2001 for his " service to Australian society through the Royal Australian Air

Force " . That year he joined celebrations at Point Cook , Victoria , to mark the 80th anniversary of the founding of the RAAF . McNamara published his autobiography , *The Quiet Man* , in 2005 . He died at Jervis Bay , New South Wales , on 7 May 2014 , and was survived by his wife and two daughters . He is commemorated by Sir Neville McNamara Drive in North Turrumurra , New South Wales .