

## Flying High - Over Brisbane

The F-18 fighter slowly crept up on my tail, the sunlight glinting off the lethal anti-aircraft missiles slung under its wings. Was my number up? Had my maiden flight in the Airbus A330 multi-role tanker transport come to an abrupt end? No, there was a thirsty F-18 with RAAF decals and that flying kangaroo at my wingtip waiting to be refuelled. My hands moved from the countermeasures switches towards the boom refuelling system controls.



The Airbus A330 multi-role tanker transport is an aerial refuelling tanker based on the civilian Airbus A330-200. The Royal Australian Air Force has five, all of which are stationed at the RAAF Base at Amberley. The Airbus A330's replaced the Boeing 707's that previously provided the RAAF with air-to-air refuelling.



The photograph to the right shows a Boeing 707 refuelling a F-18.

On Thursday, 01 August 2013, I got to fly a RAAF Airbus A330 multi-role tanker transport from the RAAF Base Amberley over Brisbane and back, slowing down only to refuel other tanker aircraft and fighter planes and I did all this with very little training and without leaving the ground.

CAE is a world leader in modelling, simulation and training for civil aviation and defence and provided simulators to the Royal Australian Air Force for the Airbus A330 multi-role tanker transport for pilot training. The CAE Team in Brisbane invited me to try the flight simulator for the Airbus A330 multi-role tanker transport at the Amberley RAAF base and it felt real to me.

I have always enjoyed flying and sometimes marvelled at the skill and ability shown by the pilots of the aircraft I have flown in. I am a Mining Engineer and my job sometimes requires me to fly into remote sites in small aircraft, landing and taking off on small dirt airstrips and here I was, flying one of the RAAF's latest aircraft over Brisbane.

What a great way to learn to fly for someone who has never flown or played computer games that would have given me an edge.

The simulators were realistic in sound, feel and visual effects of the real thing. The great facilitators supported and encouraged the best out of any person using these simulators. The feedback I received informed me of the quality of my skills and my natural abilities.

My learning from the simulators was in 3 hours, was my ability to safely fly a plane and refuelling, safely, concepts and without any previous experience. What an amazing experience! Women are now being encouraged to apply through the military, for a selective stream of pilots up to 42 years entry age. I was encouraged to apply for a role. This process is encouraged as women are rarely (have not taken up these roles) in these roles historically. Women are as able as men to excel in these and other roles. It's about the right person for the role. It's possible and should be encouraged.

We need the best in every role and work function. How do we encourage this? How do we get the right person in any role? How can we as a society make this happen? How do we give confidence to those who are capable? How do we connect the person to the role? How do we start the gender diversity conversation?

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