



THE CATALINA FLYING MEMORIAL LTD

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MEDIA RELEASE – THE FERRY FLIGHT OF PBY6A CATALINA FLYING BOAT N160AT.

The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd's wartime Catalina flying boat, purchased last year in Portugal has embarked on its epic ferry flight to Australia. At this stage, the aircraft is due to arrive at Darwin on Monday 1 December 2008.

Given the uncertainties of funding, weather, regional political situations and bureaucratic delays, not to mention the inherent challenges attached to flying a 60 year old aircraft over 12,000 miles, the exact arrival date & time cannot be determined at this stage.

From Darwin the Catalina will make its way to Bankstown in Sydney, passing through a number of locations such as Cairns, Bowen, Brisbane, Port Macquarie, Rathmines and Rose Bay. This aircraft, bearing temporary American registration N160AT, is an amphibious 1945 model PBY 6A and was last used as an aerial fire fighting water bomber in Portugal. Once in Australia, the aircraft will revert to its Australian identity, VH-CAT, the registration originally allocated when it was purchased by the Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd.

The importance of this acquisition cannot be underestimated. There were 168 Catalinas used extensively in WW11 by the RAAF and it was to Australia what the SPITFIRE was to England. The Catalina's wartime exploits were legendary, including finding the German ship *Bismarck* in the mid-Atlantic, and of course, the *Coral Sea Battle*. It played a vital role when the enemy was at our doorstep and virtually 'Saved Australia'. Sadly 320 Australian Catalina aircrew did not return from long range bombing missions, fighter strikes, mine laying, and air-sea rescue and reconnaissance missions.

The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd was originally founded by members of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia with the original intention of buying, restoring and operating a PBY Catalina aircraft for the benefit of the Catalina Association of NSW and the Catalina Aircrew Group. The Memorial is also supported by the Sunderland Association and the RAAF Maritime Squadrons. It is the Memorial's intention to maintain and operate this 'Cat' in its original configuration.

The aircraft will eventually be based at Rathmines on the shores of Lake Macquarie NSW. Formed in 1939, the RAAF Station at Rathmines became one of the major

flying boat bases for the RAAF during World War II, and housed all RAAF Catalina squadrons at various stages during the war. Following World War II, Rathmines was used as a training base, and the Officers' Training School formed there in 1950. The site is now heritage listed and an application for funds has been submitted for the construction of a hangar-style building for use as a museum.

VH-CAT will become the second flying Catalina in Australia, but the first to be operated from both land and water. The other flying Cat is operated by the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society based at Albion Park, NSW, but currently only operates as a land plane only.

After a bit of work, including the removal of the water tanks used for fire fighting and some polishing up, the new-look VH-CAT will be ready to serve our community, not only as a flying memorial to the RAAF Catalina and other flying boat crews, but also as a “living” example from a by-gone era that will help educate present and future generations. They will experience first hand what was perhaps the most romantic and graceful aspect of aviation history – the flying boat era.

It is aimed to fit the aircraft out with seating to enable paying passengers to enjoy the thrill of flying boat travel. Short scenic flights, as well as longer journeys taking in some or all the cities and towns that played host to the RAAF Catalina squadrons during World War 2 are just a few of the itineraries being considered.

Keeping an old warbird like the Catalina in tip-top flying condition requires much dedication, hard work and, of course, money. The ferry flight alone will cost approximately \$150,000. This cost could have been a lot higher had it not been for the likes of Jim Hazelton and his crew of volunteers who worked tirelessly to prepare and ferry the Cat to its new home. Jim is perhaps Australia's most experienced ferry pilot.

The aircraft was originally scheduled to depart Portugal 12 months ago. Unfortunately, an engine failure during the early stages of a take off run the day prior to its scheduled departure placed the project on hold pending the passing of the northern winter and the purchase of completely overhauled engines and new propellers at a total cost of over \$US 90,000.

This unplanned expenditure, along with the fuel required to power the Cat's two Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp radial piston engines means that funds are desperately sought to ensure the project's ongoing success. The cost of the fuel has risen to \$4 per litre in some places and burns at the rate of approximately 400 litres per hour in which time the Cat only flies about 100 miles (160 kilometres). In addition, the goal of operating the Cat from water will further add to the ongoing maintenance costs.

The Catalina Flying Memorial is a non-profit organisation supported by a dedicated team of volunteers. The project is funded entirely from tax-deductible donations, however, ongoing financial support is needed to ensure the Cat can serve present and future generations of the community in its new home for years to come. This presents a fantastic opportunity for one of our larger corporations to gain much favourable exposure through a most unique form of advertising.

For more information please contact the following:

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