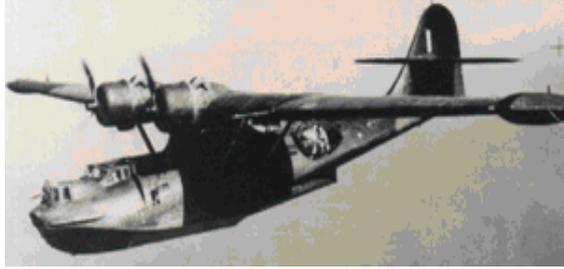




# THE CATALINA FLYING MEMORIAL LTD

ACN: 103492440

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## THE FERRY FLIGHT OF CATALINA FLYING BOAT VH-CAT POSTPONED

The ferry flight of the Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd's wartime Catalina flying boat, purchased earlier this year in Portugal has been postponed until next year owing to an engine failure during the early stages of a take off run on 17 November. The incident occurred the day prior to its scheduled departure from Seia, Portugal. The aircraft was to embark on its epic ferry flight to Australia which, all going to plan, would have seen it arrive at Darwin mid-December.

Whilst this presents a major set-back for the Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd, it is most fortunate that this event occurred on the ground prior to the commencement of the ferry flight.

After much consideration it was decided to postpone the delivery flight and, although costly, replace both engines in situ before attempting any more flying. It was originally planned to overhaul the engines after the aircraft arrived in Australia and before taking any passengers.

Replacing the engines in Seia will be no easy task and as it is now approaching winter in the northern hemisphere, the Sierra Mountains are becoming snow covered. These conditions are not conducive to flying or maintenance, which must take place out in the open. Plans are now afoot to find the best engine shop available in the world and to raise the funds necessary to fit the new engines.

This aircraft, bearing registration VH-CAT, is an amphibious 1945 model PBY 6A and was last used as an aerial fire fighting water bomber in Portugal.

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. The postponement of the ferry flight may be additionally fortunate in that its arrival will occur closer to commencement of the construction of the hangar museum at Rathmines, this increasing the safety and value of the Catalina.

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.

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, and that assumes the aircraft will be crewed by unpaid volunteers. Recovery from last weekend's set-back is expected to double this figure.

The fuel required to power the Cat's two Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp radial piston engines costs anywhere from \$1 to \$3 per litre 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 donations, however, ongoing financial support is needed not only to enable recovery from the recent set-back, but also to ensure the Cat can serve present and future generations of the community in its new home for years to come. All donations are tax deductible.

For more information please contact Neville Kennard on 0412 223 661 or Christina Mumford on 9870 7277.

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