



South Australian Aviation Museum

Aircraft Profile

McDONNELL DOUGLAS F/A-18A Hornet A21-32

On Oct 1981, the McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet was chosen by the RAAF as the replacement aircraft for the Mirage. The first two aircraft were assembled by McDonnell-Douglas in the USA while the remaining aircraft were assembled by the Government Aircraft Factories (GAF) in Victoria.

A21-32 was ordered in Nov 1981 and was built as a Block 21, A model Hornet. A21-32 and A21-101 (a Block 14 B model) were the only 2 Hornets fitted with flight test instrumentation. A21-32 was delivered to the RAAF on 16 Aug 1988 and served with 3 Squadron. This aircraft was on static display at Laverton Airshow in October 1988, the public debut of the Hornets.

A21-32 was in service at ARDU (Aircraft Research and Development Unit) for many years and was known to be at Woomera conducting multiple test programs.



A21-32 in flight over Woomera

In 2007, A21-32 was on display at the Edinburgh Air Show



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A21-32 in flight at Williamstown

'RAAF Hornets have been operationally deployed on a number of occasions since 2001, including undertaking escort to airborne tankers over Iraq in 2003 and close air support sorties in support of coalition ground forces. More recently Hornets have undertaken combat operation in support of Operation OKRA against ISIS, with detachments from each of the Hornet squadrons deployed in six month rotations.'

In Dec 2021, the Hornets were retired after nearly 40 years of service. Eight F/A-18 Hornets were identified as important heritage aircraft (including A21-32). One Hornet was allocated to each state. Boeing Defence prepared each aircraft by removing military software, hardware and chemicals for security and safety reasons before dismantling. Next, the wingless fuselage was lifted by crane onto the back of a semi-trailer for road transportation along with 22 boxes containing the wings and all other parts. Under the final stage, a team of six technicians spent approximately five weeks reassembling each aircraft at its new home.



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A21-32 was delivered to the South Australian Aviation Museum on 16 June 2022. On 9 Nov 2022, Director-General History and Heritage – Air Force AIRCDRE Robert Lawson handed over Hornet A21-32 to the Premier of South Australia Peter Malinauskas, who accepted the aircraft on behalf of SAAM.



Premier of South Australia, Mr Peter Malinauskas MP (seated in the Hornet) and Mr Jim Whalley inspect the cockpit of F/A-18A Hornet A21-32. Jim Whalley is a former RAAF pilot with more than 500 hours in Hornets, including A21-32 at Edinburgh and Woomera. Jim is also the patron of SAAM.



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As well as personnel from ARDU and the Engineering and Air Warfare Squadron, FLTLT Emily Willis (former pilot of A21-32) was present at the hand-over ceremony.

Hornet A21-32. It is now on display at SAAM in Hangar 1 alongside our General Dynamics F-111C A8-132.





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General characteristics F/A-18A

Crew:	1
Length:	56 ft 0 in (17.1 m)
Wingspan:	40 ft 0 in with Sidewinders (12.3 m)
Height:	15 ft 4 in (4.7 m)
Empty weight:	24,700 lb (11,200 kg)
Loaded weight:	37,150 lb (16,850 kg)
Max take-off weight:	51,550 lb (23,400 kg)
Payload:	13,700 lb (6,215 kg) external fuel and ordnance
Powerplant:	2× General Electric F404-GE-402 turbofans 17,751 lbf (79 kN) each
Thrust to Weight:	0.96

Performance

Maximum speed:	Mach 1.8, 1,127 mph at 36,100 ft (1,814 km/h at 11,000 m)
Range:	330 nm combat on a hi-lo-lo-hi mission 2,070 nm ferry (535 km / 3,330 km)
Service ceiling:	50,000 ft (15,000 m)
Rate of climb:	50,000 ft/min (254 m/s)

Armament

Guns:	1 x 20 mm M61 Vulcan internal Gatling gun with 578 rounds
Missiles:	Air to Air: AIM-9 Sidewinder ASRAAM AIM-120 AMRAAM AIM-7 Sparrow Anti-ship: AGM-84 Harpoon Air to Ground: AGM-158 JASSM
Bombs:	Mk 82 500lb (227kg) General Purpose Mk 84 2000lb (907kg) General Purpose Paveway III Laser Guidance Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM)