The Australian
Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4891

Staib, Margaret Mary

(1962 -)

Born	19621220, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia
Occupation	Air vice-marshal, Chief Executive Officer

Summary

Air Vice-Marshal Margaret Staib was the Australian Defence Forces' (ADF) most senior female officer when she took over as Airservices Australia CEO on October 15, 2012. As the ADF's senior logistician, AVM Staib served as Commander Joint Logistics and played a key role in implementing a $2.4 billion logistics reform program under the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper. In the 2026 Australia Day Honours she was appointed Member of the Order of Australia (AM) 'for significant service to business, to the aviation sector, and to the freight and logistics industry.'

Details

Margaret Staib spent thirty-one years with the Australian Defence Force before joining Air Services Australia as CEO in October 2012. In 2009, she was appointed a joint logistics commander and air vice-marshal before making the move, which made her the highest ranking woman in the Australian military.

Born into an air force family in Canberra in1962, the family moved around a fair bit when Staib was young. Obviously, she was no stranger to military life, but is wasn't until she attended a jobs fair in her last year at high school (at Merici School) that she decided to follow that path herself. She joined the RAAF in 1981, completed her Bachelor of Business at the University of Southern Queensland in 1983 and graduated as a supply officer.

Her first posting was to Darwin as the Assistant Facilities Officer. Most of her early career was spent learning basic level logistics and stock control. Throughout the 1990s her career in logistics developed and she served as the Personal Staff Officer to the Air Officer Commanding Logistics Command and then the newly formed joint service Commander Support Command. This career progression helped her to understand the ways in which teamwork lay at the heart of a smooth functioning military. 'In the air force, we operate very much as a team,' she says. 'A lot of things come together to fly a plane.' *(Where my ideas come from)* While working to gain this experience, she studied a Masters of Business Logistics through Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology to gain the theoretical perspective. In 2000 Staib's contribution and leadership in the field of ADF Aviation Inventory Management was recognised when she was awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross.

Staib travelled to the Pentagon for a two year exchange in 2000, gaining experience in working with other military and commercial groups. She was there to work on electronic supply chain models and after her day 3 at her posting was quite overwhelmed by the scale of the operation and it had an impact on her ability to do her job properly. 'I found out there were 13,500 people in one building; that's the size of my air force,' she observed. Every time she got overwhelmed, she'd try to get herself back on track by focusing on the mantra 'Margaret, that's not what you are here to do.' *(Where my ideas come from)* It must have been effective, because her service with the US Air Force was recognised with the United States Meritorious Service medal after her posting.

Further study – a Masters of Arts in Strategic Studies, completed in 2005 at the Australian Defence Force Academy – accompanied her appointment to the position of Director of Planning and Logistics – Airforce in 2002 on her return from the U.S. A string of other logistics posts, including Director Logistics Support Agency- Airforce (2006-7) and then Director-General Strategic Logistics (2007-9) followed. In 2009 she spent a year as the Commandant of the Australian Defence Force Academy and was appointed as a member in the Military Division of the Order of Australia. In that same year she was promoted to air vice marshal.

Air Vice-Marshal Margaret Staib was appointed Commander Joint Logistics in January 2010 a position, as described by ex – Transport Minister, Anthony Albanese as one in which Air Vice-Marshal Staib 'planned, coordinated and delivered logistics support for Australian Defence Force operations and exercises overseas and in our own backyard.' *(Logistics Gun Shoots to Airservices Australia's Top Rank)* She played a key role in developing and implementing the $2.4 billion logistics reform program – a major initiative of the 2009 Australian Defence White Paper.

Staib has managed to progress her career despite being a widowed mother of twins. She was seven weeks pregnant when her husband was killed in an aircraft accident. It wasn't until she was about twenty weeks pregnant that she discovered she was having twins. 'That was a bit of a struggle but the air force was so supportive,' she says. 'People ask me how I coped. It was almost binary: you choose to cope or not and once you've made the decision the rest falls into place.' *(Where my ideas come from)*
A hallmark of her success as a leader is her ability to recognise the areas she can influence and her regular conduct of 'organisational health checks', by getting out and talking to people. 'I'm very conscious of structures that can mask what people are feeling. So it is very much about getting out and talking to people and having an honest conversation.' *(Where my ideas come from)* Another is recognising that pace of change, when a leader has a mandate to make change, must be managed very carefully. 'There's always a danger with the new-broom approach, you don't want to break a system with unintended consequences,' she said. 'I like to put my feet under the table and get to know the organisation from the inside.' *(New Chief of the air)*

Published resources

Newspaper Article
Where my ideas come from, Hoper, Narelle, 2012

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Logistics gun shoots to Airservices Australia's top rank, 2012,
http://www.supplychainreview.com.au/news.aspx?mid=548&dnnprintmode=true&ArticleID=81020&SkinSrc=[G]Skins%2FSupply

Resource
Website of the Royal Australian Air Force Air Power Development Centre, 'Air Vice Marshals (L-Z)', 2012,
http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/Contents/About-APDC/About-APDC/Office-of-Air-Force-History/Air-Marshals-of-the-RAAF/137/Air

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Created 13 February 2013
Last modified 20 February 2026