

INTRODUCTION

This book tells the story of the Consolidated Catalina flying boat in Australian service in World War Two. The Catalina operated from the first day of the Pacific War to the last, successfully carrying out an extraordinary range of important missions.

The book describes the Catalina's technical characteristics, its operational history and the wartime experiences of prominent Catalina aircrew. There is also an assessment of the Catalina's overall contribution to Australia's war effort.

The conditions experienced by Catalina aircrew, which included taking part in missions extending more than 24 hours, are outlined. The book shows how the skill, bravery and endurance of aircrew members and the ground crew who supported them were critical to the Catalina's success as a weapon of war.

In telling the Catalina's story I depended on primary records held by the National Archives of Australia. These include documents from the Royal Australian Air Force, the Australian government's War Cabinet and government departments.

As a flying boat, the Catalina's contributions to the RAAF's efforts in the Pacific War are all too often overshadowed by more glamorous aircraft, such as the P-40 Kittyhawk fighter, the brutally effective Beaufighter strike aircraft and the B-24 Liberator heavy bomber. However, this book shows the Catalina should enjoy equal recognition as an aircraft that made an important contribution to Australia's war effort.

Don Williams
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