

RAAF, NEA (North Eastern Area Command Headquarters Townsville)
1942-1956

VP-75

Brief history in chronological order:

08 May 1941 RAAF Headquarters Northern Area was formed and established itself in the Commonwealth Offices at 42 Sturt Street Townsville.

15 January 1942 Northern Area Headquarters was renamed to North-Eastern Area Headquarters (NEA).

Major General Ralph Royce USAAF was the North –Eastern Area Commander in August 42. His Chief of Staff was Air Commodore Lukis RAAF.

During the same month General George C. Kenny USAAF appointed Brigadier General Kenneth Walker USAAF to command the Allied Air Forces in the North-Eastern Area with the assistance of Group Captain William Henry “Bull”Garing RAAF.

Major General Royce recalled to the USA.

May 1942 following the Battle of the Coral Sea, USAAF units no longer operated under RAAF control in the NEA but were commanded directly by senior American officers of the USAAF, overall responsibility for operational tasking in the NEA transferred to the USAAF at the end of July 1942.

19 August 1942 the boundaries of the North-Eastern Area were revised and on the 25 August 1942 Air Commodore A.H. Cobby RAAF succeed Air Commodore Lukis, in the command of the North-Eastern Area Station HQ in Townsville.

Air Commodore Cobby served as AOC NEA until November 1943, handing over to Air Commodore John Summers RAAF, who held command for the remainder of the war.

01 September 1942, No.9 (Operational) Group was formed at Port Moresby, it took over all units in New Guinea previously operating under NEA Command.

September 1942 also saw the formation of RAAF Command, led by Air Vice Marshal Bill Bostock, to oversee the majority of Australian flying units in the SWPA.

07 November 1942 the North-Eastern Area Air Operations Room (A.O.R) moved to Sidney Street West End (Green Street Bunker) and Townsville W/T Station took over the whole of the top floor of the North-Eastern Area Headquarters building at 42 Sturt Street.

February 1943 No.42 (Radar) Wing was formed in Townsville and the following month took control of all radar stations in NEA.

April 1943, No. 72 Wing was formed in Townsville, before deploying to Merauke.

By May 1943, NEA's order of battle on the Australian mainland consisted of Nos.7, 9 , 13 (operating Venturas from Cooktown), and No.20 and 23 Squadrons.

February 1944, No 75 Wing headquarters moved from Horn Island to Higgins Field where it was joined by No.7 and 23 Squadrons.

April 1944, No. 9 Group was renamed Northern Command and given responsibility for RAAF units in New Guinea.

August 1944 No.76 Wing disbanded and its units became the direct responsibility of NEA headquarters.

October 1944, No.42 Wing disbanded.

By the end of February 1945, NEA headquarters staff numbered 743, including 127 officers.

Post-war NEA:

02 December 1945, following the end of the Pacific War, South West Pacific Area was dissolved and the RAAF again assumed full control of all its operational elements. The Air Force shrank dramatically as personnel were demobilized and units disbanded. NEA headquarters staff at the end of 1945 totaled 227, including 63 officers.

February 1947, Northern Command (re-designated as Northern Area in 1945) was dissolved.

1949, NEA headquarters was located in Sturt Street. No.10 Squadron was based in Townsville from March that year.

September 1951, Group Captain (later Air Commodore) Ian McLachlan was appointed AOC NEA, he served two years in the post before handing over to Air Commodore Patrick Heffernan.

1953/1954 The RAAF was re-organized and NEA headquarters remained in existence as one of Home Command's "remote command points".

03 December 1956 NEA was disbanded, and was succeeded by Headquarters RAAF Townsville (Headquarters Tactical Transport Group from June 1988, and Headquarters Operational Support Group from February 1991).

Information sourced from:

Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North-Eastern_Area_Command

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