

## The Douglas C-47B Daklota



The DC-3 and Dakota earn a place in the Aircraft Hall of Fame. The RAAF and Australia owes a large debt to what was the most important transport aircraft in the history of aviation. Known as the Douglas DC-3 or C-47B, the aircraft carried the bulk of wartime passengers and freight. Post-war, the C-47B provided transport service for the RAAF, served as a Navigation Trainer, SAR aircraft and supported many RAAF units into the 1980s.

With the 1939-45 war came massive production of the DC-3 in the military versions C-47B and C-53 in United States service and Dakota in the service of British and Commonwealth nations, including Australia.

The Royal Australian Air Force's first DC-3s were the four ANA aircraft impressed into service at the start of World War II—124 C-47 Dakotas were supplied under Lend-Lease between 1943 and 1945. These carried the RAAF serial numbers A65-1 to 124 and were joined by numerous aircraft operated on behalf of the USAAF's transport organisation in the region. Of the 124 "regular" RAAF Dakotas, four were later supplied to the Royal Australian Navy and 47 were converted to civilian configuration for service with Australia's airlines after the war. Regardless of their actual model, these aircraft were always known as 'DC-3s' by the public.

By 1955 there were still 83 DC-3s in civilian service in Australia, a figure which represented ten per cent of all Australian civil aircraft at the time—the numbers have declined since and in 1989 only a dozen remain on the civil register. The RAAF Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU) operated four for special tasks and the Royal Australian Navy Historic Flight operated a single aircraft.

