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## RAAF Officer Honoured for Pathology Excellence

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Squadron Leader Kathryn Staughton of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) has been recognised for her exceptional contributions to the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) operational health capabilities, receiving the prestigious McCarthy Rowbottom Jones Memorial Award. The award ceremony took place at Gallipoli Barracks in Brisbane on 30 June 2025 and highlights Staughton's leadership in enhancing battlefield medical readiness.

The award, established in 2007, commemorates three RAAF medical personnel—Squadron Leader Paul McCarthy, Flight Lieutenant Lynne Rowbottom, and Sergeant Wendy Jones—who lost their lives in a 2005 helicopter crash during a humanitarian mission in Indonesia. It is presented annually to Air Force personnel who demonstrate compassion, skill, and courage in the delivery of health services.

Staughton, who serves with No. 1 Expeditionary Health Squadron at RAAF Base Amberley, was honoured for her work in strengthening the ADF Blood Program—a critical component of battlefield medicine. Her efforts focused on identifying operational gaps in blood logistics, storage, and transfusion practices during deployment scenarios. This included research into rapid delivery mechanisms, clinical training improvements, and policy reforms, all aimed at ensuring the availability of safe blood products to frontline clinicians.

Her initiatives were credited with improving ADF preparedness to respond to combat casualties and humanitarian missions, ensuring that personnel deployed in austere or remote environments have access to essential life-saving support. Staughton emphasised the role of collaboration, noting that her work was enabled by a supportive command chain and a multidisciplinary team dedicated to innovation.

Originally from Clifton, Queensland, Staughton transitioned to the Air Force in 2017 after earlier service in the Australian Army. Her scientific background, combined with operational insight, has been key to her contributions in military pathology. Her family, including her mother Daphne Hargens, expressed pride in her achievements and encouraged more young Australians to explore careers in Defence health services.

The award not only highlights Staughton's individual excellence but also underscores the ADF's broader commitment to strengthening its health support infrastructure. As defence operations increasingly require rapid medical responses in diverse settings, specialised roles such as military pathology are essential to mission success. Staughton's recognition affirms the value of ongoing investment in clinical research and operational innovation within the ADF's health system.