



BELL 206B – 1 Kiowa

A great leap forward in technology and ability

By 1964, less than four years after the introduction of the Bell 47 “Sioux” helicopter into Australian Army service, the Department of Defence was already looking for a replacement. Because of its age and limited capability, the Army faced a severe problem providing effective and efficient air support to its forces. However it was to take another nine years for a suitable replacement to appear.

In 1971 it was decided that the Bell 206B-1 Kiowa, the military version of the civilian JetRanger would replace the Sioux. This was a timely decision as 161 (Independent) Reconnaissance Flight was still operating in the Vietnam War, and the government had decided to “dry lease” eight Kiowa's from the United States Army for the last eight months of the unit's involvement in the conflict. This was great foresight as it gave the aircrew and the maintenance personnel operational experience on the aircraft. This ensured a smoother transition to the Kiowa when it did come into service.

The aircraft became operational in 1973, and served with The School of Army Aviation, 161 Reconnaissance Flight, 162, and 171 at Holsworthy.