



## BELL 47 SIOUX

***The Bell 47G light helicopter was the first helicopter to enter Australian Army service and represented a significant breakthrough for Army flying.***

### History

The Bell 47 Sioux was the first rotary wing aircraft owned and operated by the Australian Army. Early American military helicopters were all named after Native American tribes. Between 24 October 1960 and 11 April 1969, the Army took delivery of 65 Bell 47s in three different versions – G2, G2-A and G3-B1. These versatile aircraft were the backbone of the Australian Army Aviation for over a decade. They operated throughout Australia, Papua New Guinea, Sumatra, Malaya, Singapore and South Vietnam.

In Vietnam the Sioux, with the call sign 'Possum', performed visual reconnaissance and liaison missions as well as operating as aerial command posts. Eight aircraft were lost during the Vietnam conflict, four of which were shot down, all without the loss of a pilot.

Sioux were operated by the School of Army Aviation, 183 Squadron and 161, 162, 163, 171 and 182 Flight at home and overseas.

From 1973, the Sioux began to be replaced by the Bell 206B Kiowa. Of the 65 aircraft, 31 were written off, and by the time of the last official flight on 19 November 1975, the Bell Sioux aircraft had flown a total of 153,855 hours. The last aircraft was withdrawn from service in 1977.

Bell wanted to give the last aircraft (A1-738) to the Australian government as a gift. As the government was unable to accept this offer, Bell agreed to sell the aircraft to Australia for \$1.00 on the condition that it was never resold! This aircraft is now in the care of the Museum of Australian Army Flying.

## ***Heroic Action***

In February 1967, during Operation Renmark, part of the Vietnam conflict, Captain Jim Campbell risked his own safety repeatedly while flying his Sioux helicopter, serial A1-404 to rescue wounded Australian soldiers from a minefield. For his heroic actions he was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross.