

AUSTRALIAN SPORTPILOT

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**DARWIN TO THE
KIMBERLEYS**

A Trip Up North

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IN AUSTRALIA**

For Pilots Dreaming of Back Country Flying

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WINGS OR WHEELS?

Words & Images **Amy Spicer**

Heading from tween to teen, the decision will soon come for me whether a driver's licence or pilot's licence will come first.

For most kids the decision would be easy. "What will my first car be?" "Will it look good... will it go fast?" But for aviators and student pilots the decision may not be so straightforward. After initial training for a Recreational Pilot Certificate, and with as little as 20 hours training and a competency pass, student pilots can solo as young as 15 years old. RAAus has more than 160 approved flight schools and can take you from fun flying to serious career journeys. Student pilots often start their flying in whatever aircraft their flight school has available, or they may have a personal favourite. The choice can vary from Cessnas through to Pipistrel electric and many choices in between.

What aircraft do I *dream* of flying? And is it better to start with wings or wheels?

Amy doesn't know if she wants to go wings or wheels, but she's certain she wants to go fast and far.





Bristell B23 IFR powered by a turbocharged Rotax 915iS Engine. Credit: BRM AERO s.r.o.

Recently I spent some time thinking of my dream aircraft. I love the Pipistrel Alpha Electro for its convenience, size and lower costs as a training plane. From my childhood I was excited by the Cirrus SR range with its incredible safety option of the CAPS (parachute safety system), but recently I found the very sleek Bristell capturing my eye. I thought I'd do a comparison between my dream luxury car and a gorgeous luxury plane. The McLaren 750S versus the Bristell B23 Turbo.

A bit of online research and a few emails later, I was standing in the showroom of McLaren Perth. Wow! These cars are sleek! They were like sparkling jewels in colours of Papaya (McLaren's signature orange), Flux Green and Volcano Yellow. They also come in the most amazing colours of Aurora Blue and an incredible dark silver with a metallic red sparkly undertone.

I was lucky enough to sit in several of the cars with the help of Anthony and Bridgette from McLaren.

I'm still only a kid, so I imagine these aircraft peeking out of open hangar doors thinking "it's a beautiful day, could I *pleeease* go for a fly?"

These cars just rumble on start-up! The all-glass instrument panels would seem overwhelming for most car owners, but for a student pilot with a future of Garmin glass cockpits it seemed quite normal to me. There were lots of buttons plus some classic features, including gull-wing doors and customisable everything! The comparison between automotive and aviation was clear to see in nearly every feature. It also helped to already know they sit quite close in speed and luxury fittings, but not horsepower! McLaren would be pleased to know they topped the charts in that area. They obviously spend millions of dollars in development

	McLAREN 750S	BRISTELL B23 TURBO
Price	\$800K + extras	\$398-548K + options
Speed	332km/h	291km/h VNE Cruise at 240km/h VNO (157 knots VNE 130 Knots VNO)
Engine	V8 4.0L	Rotax 915/916 Turbo
HP	740HP	141/160HP
Empty Weight	1,389kg	465 kg MTOW 750kg
Body Structure	Carbon Fibre Monocage	Aluminium with composite in non-structural areas
Interior	Dash – full glass	Cockpit – dual Garmin G3X screens
Customisation	McLaren Configurator	BRM Aero SRO

and F1 Racing, so their on-road customers can also take advantage of that. Behind the beautiful cars in the showroom is also a mega-screen showing a real time view of the McLaren factory production floor. I stood absolutely transfixed by the cars being assembled and the workers in a pristine white factory. It was so easy to fall in love with the McLarens.

But as much as I'd dream of owning a McLaren one day, my heart absolutely belongs in aviation, and I got a personal introduction to a local, privately owned Bristell for my second photoshoot. The BRM Bristell B23 Turbo will only set you back a fraction of the price of a McLaren. Sitting peacefully and unassumingly by itself in the hangar, I knew the Bristell was equally amazing. Hopping into the seat and scanning the cockpit, it just feels like home. The true magic of this aircraft only slightly reveals itself on the ground, as it leaves its star performance for when it's airborne. I'm still only a kid, so I imagine these aircraft peeking out of open hangar doors thinking "it's a beautiful day, could I please go for a fly?"

And the Bristell would be quick! Compared to a McLaren, the BRM Bristell B23's cruise speed of 291 km/h would be pure FUN! Add to that a range of 1111km (600 nautical miles), and certification up to 18,000 feet, pilots could just go and enjoy themselves or cover serious distances for work. The B23 sports a high performance Rotax engine and MT propeller for agility and excellent response. I was relieved to see they also have a Ballistic Rescue System. The Garmin Autopilot would make the long-range flights

more comfortable. There are a few features that I've never seen on an aircraft before, and both the steerable nose wheel and exhaust silencers were intriguing. But what related the most to my personal flying experiences was the tow hook! The Bristell B23 might only be a 2-seater, but it can tow gliders up to 800kg. This gives you the ability to launch your friends in their glider so everyone can enjoy a flying day. Customisable seats and paint can make your Bristell look amazing! BRM's vision is to produce luxurious high-quality airplanes, but I love their explanation of their planes better – *Wings with a Heart!*

It was super-fun to do a comparison between luxury wheels and wings. My McLaren visit was certainly unique and I absolutely loved the Bristell. One day, maybe? We can all dream.



McLaren Perth gave Amy a dream tour of the showroom floor.