

# Passing the torch

Arrival of Boeing's Super Hornets allows Australia to retire its iconic F-111s

By Karinne Cilento

**F**or nearly 40 years, the F-111 was Australia's front-line strike aircraft, later working alongside the country's fleet of Boeing F/A-18 A/B Hornets to protect Australia.

But this month, following the last flight on Dec. 3, Australia's F-111s fly into the history books.

"Boeing, in close partnership with the Commonwealth of Australia, transformed one of the oldest strike aircraft still operating in the world into a powerful front-line warfighter that competed on an equal footing with the latest military hardware," John Duddy, vice president and managing director of Boeing Defence Australia, said of the F-111.

"We are justifiably proud of the positive impact we had on this iconic Australian aircraft."

For the Boeing Defence Australia team, the retirement of the F-111s was a bittersweet event even though the aircraft is not Boeing-built. Since 2001, the team maintained the F-111's airframe and performed extensive upgrades that improved the fleet's reliability, availability and capability for the Royal Australian Air Force. With the aircraft's retirement, that ends.

"This work has been the backbone of Boeing Defence Australia for more than a decade and established it as one of the Australian Defence Force's most important engineering organizations," said Murray Brabrook, director of the Global Services & Support-Australia Integrated Logistics division.

"We were able to demonstrate to the Commonwealth that we were capable of supporting and enhancing their mission-critical aircraft, Boeing-built or not," he added.

But there's a sweet side for Boeing Defence Australia—the engineering, supply chain management and maintenance it is now providing for 24 F/A-18F Super Hornets that are being delivered this year and next. Arrival of the more capable Boeing fighters allowed Australia to retire its F-111s. The first five Super Hornets were delivered ahead of schedule to Australia in March 2010 and another



**"We are justifiably proud of the positive impact we had on this iconic Australian aircraft."**

— John Duddy, vice president and managing director of Boeing Defence Australia

**PHOTOS: (Above)** The F-111 performs a "dump and burn," during which fuel is dumped and intentionally ignited using the aircraft's afterburner.  
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

**(Insets, from left)** Boeing Defence Australia employees service an F-111 at RAAF Base Amberley; Rob Connell performs maintenance on one of the strike aircraft; Boeing Defence Australia was responsible for the F-111 wing refurbishment program. BOEING



**“We were able to demonstrate to the Commonwealth that we were capable of supporting and enhancing their mission-critical aircraft.”**

*– Murray Brabrook, director of the Global Services & Support–Australia Integrated Logistics division*

**PHOTO:** The F-111 is one of the only aircraft in the world that can perform the “dump and burn.” For years, this spectacular maneuver was a highlight at major Australian sporting events, air shows and fireworks events. ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

six were delivered in July. More deliveries are scheduled over the next year, with the final delivery in October 2011.

It was Boeing Defence Australia’s successful support work on the F-111 that was a key factor in obtaining Super Hornet support work, according to Glen Ferguson, Super Hornet program manager for Boeing Defence Australia.

“The Air Force wanted a proven solution that could be applied immediately with low risk,” Ferguson explained. “We had the people, skills and processes already in place—as well as a success record—enabling a seamless and rapid transition. We’ve been able to redeploy our best and brightest engineers and tradespeople from the F-111 program to the Super Hornet program, among others.” ■

*karinne.n.cilento@boeing.com*

