

# High 5



## Boeing delivers first five Super Hornets to the Royal Australian Air Force

by Philip Carder

**J**ohn Clayton has helped build Boeing's F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets for 24 years. He was on the assembly line in St. Louis last May when the first Super Hornet destined for Australia began to take shape.

In March, the first five Super Hornets arrived in Australia. Nineteen more are on order for the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

"There's definitely a sense of pride knowing we're doing this work for Australia, and I know the aircraft will be welcomed by the RAAF," said Clayton, who performs wire integrity testing on the aircraft.

Indeed they were.

Air Marshal Mark Binskin, Chief of Air Force, was among those at RAAF Base Amberley near Brisbane when the Super Hornets landed, escorted by four Royal Australian Air Force F-111 strike fighters.

"The Super Hornet is going to really enhance our air combat capability over the next 10 years as we transition from the older fighter force to the new," Binskin said. He also noted how quickly Boeing and its industry partners delivered the jets. "This is a record time, three years from decision to delivery. You don't get any quicker than that in this game."

The Australian government announced in 2007 it would acquire 24 of the aircraft, making it the first international Super Hornet customer. The aircraft will replace aging F-111s that have served the Royal Australian Air Force since the early 1970s.

The Super Hornet is able to perform a number of tactical missions including air superiority, day and night strike with precision-guided weapons, fighter escort, close air support, suppression of enemy air defenses, maritime strike, reconnaissance, aerial refueling and forward air control.

"This jet is a quantum leap for Amberley, for Queensland and Australia," said Glen Braz, commander of the Royal Australian Air Force's No. 1 Squadron, which will operate the Super Hornet. "Now we can dominate in every spectrum."

Dennis Muilenburg, president and CEO of Boeing Defense, Space & Security, said the Super Hornet is important for Australia and for Boeing, and continues a partnership of more than 80 years. "The exceptional collaboration and teamwork between Australia's Defence Materiel Organisation, the Royal Australian

Air Force, the U.S. Navy and the Hornet industry team was the foundation that ensured these new Super Hornets are now ready to begin their RAAF service," Muilenburg said.

Bob Gower, vice president of Boeing's F/A-18 and EA-18 programs, said the teamwork involved in the Australia Super Hornet program has been remarkable. "From day one of this program, it's been all about working together. This is a great example of executing flawlessly to satisfy our customer. We promised to deliver four Super Hornets to our RAAF customer by March 26. We delivered five."

Boeing will deliver the remaining 19 Super Hornets through 2011. All will be built in St. Louis.

Tim Watson, F/A-18 structure assembly manager, has helped build Super Hornets on the St. Louis production line since the start of the program in 1994. "It's a great feeling to build products that protect freedom every day," he said. "It's also great knowing our allies and warfighters trust Boeing and the quality products we build here in St. Louis, and that they know they are getting the best product for their money." ■

*philip.b.carder@boeing.com*



**PHOTO:** The first five Super Hornets for the Royal Australian Air Force arrive at RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland, Australia. AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE



**“There’s definitely a sense of pride knowing we’re doing this work for Australia, and I know the aircraft will be welcomed by the RAAF.”**

*– John Clayton, sheet metal assembler and riveter, St. Louis*

PHOTO: RICHARD RAU/BOEING