

Feature Story

Boeing opening doors for Australian space manufacturing

- Brisbane suppliers identified to join the ranks of Boeing's JP9102 supply chain.

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Several Australian businesses are poised to join the burgeoning space industry having been identified by Boeing as frontrunners to manufacture parts for the JP9102 defence satellite communications program.

“In February, Boeing announced a \$5 million development program to build Australian space capability and we're now actively evaluating Australian suppliers for their compatibility to support satellite production for Boeing's operation in El Segundo, California,” said Kathryn Burr, Boeing Defence Australia's JP9102 program manager.

“This investment is being made ahead of the JP9102 down-select decision with a view to building Australia's broader space manufacturing capability and potentially open doors to Boeing's global supply chain.”

Joining Boeing's growing Australian space manufacturing team, which already includes Quickstep, Cablex and others, are several Brisbane-based companies which Boeing have recently pre-qualified based on their staff, facilities, procedures, equipment, parts management, processes and quality controls.

“We are at varying stages of engagement with these suppliers,” said Burr. “Quickstep has recently visited the U.S. to get a deep understanding of capital, tooling and materials to perform test work for space parts along with intellectual property transfer requirements, and Cablex is moving forward with a sample harness build.

“We're also in the process of placing orders for ground support equipment and anticipate releasing purchase orders over the next couple of months.

“For businesses in the initial stages of engagement, we are working with them in-depth to detail Boeing's specific requirements and assisting with training and certification requirements.”

The suppliers identified to date are just the start of what Boeing anticipates will be a broad-ranging local supplier base.

“Space manufacturing is a relatively new industry for Australia, so most of the manufacturers we are speaking to are eager about the opportunity to begin building space products,” said Burr.

“We are continually working to identify Australian suppliers who have the capability to develop a range of space products from complex bus, payload and solar array composite structural

assemblies to circuit card assemblies, harnesses, and various mechanism and machine part assemblies.”