

TEN YEARS OF F/A-18F SUPER HORNETS IN AUSTRALIA

Boeing is celebrating the 10th anniversary of the arrival of the first tranche of five Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) F/A-18F Super Hornets in-country on 26 March 2010. Since that time, Boeing has partnered with the RAAF and local subcontractors to deliver all sustainment and upgrades under the Air Combat Electronic Attack Sustainment Program (ACEASP).

This partnership has helped Boeing deliver enhanced capability to the combat-proven, cutting-edge, next-generation Super Hornet, to maintain regional air superiority now and well into the future.

March 2010

On the 26th, the first five RAAF F/A-18F Super Hornets arrived at RAAF Base Amberley.

December 2010

The RAAF achieved Initial Operating Capability of the Super Hornet capability.

October 2011

On the 21st, the final four RAAF Super Hornets arrived at RAAF Base Amberley. It completed the delivery of all 24 RAAF Super Hornets by Boeing ahead of contract schedule and on budget.

December 2012

The RAAF's 24 Super Hornets achieved Final Operating Capability.

Sept 2014 –

March 2015

No. 1 Squadron deployed Super Hornets on combat operations as part of the strike element for Operation OKRA; a key element of the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the international effort to combat the Daesh terrorist threat in Iraq and Syria. Through the course of the deployment, Boeing provided on-call, 24-hour support to ensure the Super Hornets were consistently ready and reliable. By the end of the deployment, the fleet achieved an exceptionally high combat mission launch rate.

October 2015 –

October 2016

Boeing implemented the Increment 1 Spiral Upgrade modification on all 24 Super Hornets. The hardware and software upgrades included airframe structural modifications to improve fatigue life and eliminate hazards, anti-jam upgrades to aircraft GPS receivers, a new targeting system for air-to-ground weapons, and an enhanced aircraft recording system for post-flight replay.

July 2016

On the 1st, Boeing Defence Australia replaced The Boeing Company as the prime contractor of the ACEASP contract with five sub-contractors: The Boeing Company, Raytheon Australia, Northrop Grumman Australia, Airspeed Pty Ltd and Pacific Aerospace Consulting. The contract sees Boeing leverage both local industry expertise and Original Equipment Manufacturer capabilities from The Boeing Company to provide sustainment services for the Super Hornets (and EA-18G Growlers). Boeing's sustainment services encompass logistics, maintenance, engineering, and operational and capability upgrade project management services for the fleets.

February 2017

The F/A-18F Super Hornet fleet was complemented by the arrival of the first two EA-18G Growler aircraft at RAAF Base Amberley.

April 2017 –

January 2018

No.1 Squadron deployed for a second Operation OKRA tour in the Middle East. As with the first deployment, Boeing provided on-call, 24 support to the Super Hornet aircraft that again enabled a very high combat-mission launch rate.



Background

Sustainment and Maintenance

- Boeing Defence Australia has sustained the Super Hornets since they were introduced into service, delivering all logistics, maintenance, engineering, and operational and capability upgrade services.
- Boeing delivers best-for-capability solutions by bringing together the various parts of the Air Combat Electronic Attack Enterprise, which includes Boeing and the RAAF, as well as subcontractors The Boeing Company, Raytheon Australia, Northrop Grumman Australia, Airspeed Pty Ltd, Pacific Aerospace Consulting and, since early 2020, Martin Baker Australia.
- The sustainment framework integrates the US Navy's established support networks to enhance capability, support mission readiness and reduce costs for the RAAF's Super Hornet and Growler fleets.
- The ACEASP contract is operated under a platform stewardship model, whereby Boeing is entrusted to undertake all current and future sustainment and upgrade requirements to optimise, on an enduring basis, the Super Hornet fleet. It enables a long-term view of the health of the weapon system to ensure the RAAF's capability roadmap is achieved.

Upgrades

- The US Navy operates a spiral development program for their F/A-18F Super Hornet and EA-18G fleets to ensure they maintain their capability edge against the ever-changing threat environment. The RAAF fleets remains in lock step with the US Navy fleets by participating in the spiral development program.
- The spiral upgrades are major capital acquisition projects delivered in sustainment, realising significant hardware and software enhancements to the fleets on a two-yearly cycle. Each upgrade is project managed by Boeing Defence Australia through the ACEASP Change Team, in close collaboration with the ACEA System Program Office.