

Boeing Business Jet Introduces New Era for Australian Leaders

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The first Boeing Business Jet (BBJ) for the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), shown publicly in Australia for the first time today, introduces a new era of capability for long-distance international travel.

The Canberra-based Air Force 34 Squadron will operate two BBJs under a lease managed by Qantas Defence Services. Able to fly nearly anywhere in the world from Australia with only one stop, the two BBJs, in slightly varying configurations, will be used by Australian government leaders and senior executives traveling on official business. The Australian BBJs, outfitted with a VIP cabin and business class style seating for 36 passengers, were completed by Ozark Aircraft Systems in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Approximately 200 government transport and head-of-state airplanes are in operation worldwide. More than half are large airframes -- the size of a Boeing 737 or larger -- and 80 percent are Boeing products. Many governments are finding the BBJ platform a valuable tool for international transport. In addition to the Australian government, the government of South Africa will begin operating a BBJ later this year. The U.S. Air Force will put its first C-40B, based on the BBJ, into service this fall. And the U.S. Navy operates a C-40A, which is based on the same platform as the BBJ, a Boeing 737-700.

The BBJ is a version of the popular Boeing 737, similar to those already in service in the South Pacific region with Qantas Airways, Virgin Blue, Air Pacific and Polynesian Airlines. The Australian Air Force's Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) airplanes, currently under development, also are sister platforms to the BBJ.

"We're honored that the Commonwealth of Australia has chosen the BBJ for its VIP transportation needs. It is also great to see the first Boeing Business Jet based in the South Pacific region," said Lee Monson, president of Boeing Business Jets. "The capabilities of this airplane make it ideal to meet the long distances facing any traveler from Australia. And because it is based on the best-selling jetliner of all time, the BBJ brings unparalleled reliability and cost-effectiveness."

The BBJ continues to meet market demand for an executive airplane that can fly passengers more than 6,000 nautical miles (11,100 kilometers) in a comfortable, spacious cabin. Fifty BBJs now are fully completed and in service. The BBJ platform is flexible enough that operators -- such as private individuals, governments, corporations and fractional programs -- can have a passenger seating area as well as an executive lounge, a private suite and a bedroom, if required.

Boeing Business Jets was launched in 1996 as a joint venture between Boeing and General Electric. Designed for corporate and VIP applications, the BBJ is a high-performance derivative of the Next-Generation 737-700. The BBJ 2, announced in October 1999, is based on the 737-800 and has 25 percent more cabin space and twice the cargo space of the BBJ. Both provide unsurpassed levels of space, comfort and utility and are backed by a global support program with dedicated field service representatives.

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