

BAE'S EXPLOSIVE DEAL

PAUL STARICK

Adelaide-based defence giant BAE Systems Australia has won a \$160m deal to triple production of a passive radio frequency sensor for joint strike missiles supplied to Australia and key allies.

Unveiling the deal as part of a plan to rapidly escalate Australian missile manufacturing, Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy revealed this would provide more than 1000 sensors for missiles across the world.

Details of the sensor are classified but BAE describes it as a “highly innovative technology” designed and developed in South Australia, with a “world-leading capability and a critical enhancing component of the joint strike missile”.

Mr Conroy said long-range strike missiles were critical to deter potential enemies and enable the Australian Defence Force to target an adversary from greater distances.

He announced the federal government and Lockheed Martin Australia would establish an Australian Weapons Manufacturing Complex, based in either New South Wales or Victoria.

“In a world marked by supply chain disruption and strategic fragility, Australia needs not only to acquire more missiles, but to make more here at home,” he said.

“... Australia has the foundations needed for a world-class guided weapons and explosive ordnance manufacturing industry.

“We can create a new industry that will make us more secure while creating skilled jobs for Australian workers.”

BAE Systems Australia managing director of defence delivery Andrew Gresham said the passive radio frequency sensor deal illustrated the company's focus on research and development, and turning the outcomes into “real cutting-edge technology for use on the battlefield”.

“This is a significant achievement for our manufacturing teams at Edinburgh Parks and an innovation success story that has required more

than a decade of commitment from our employees and our partner Kongsberg,” he said.

The joint strike missile, developed by Norwegian firm Kongsberg, is the only anti-ship cruise missile that can be carried internally by the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

Kongsberg’s Adelaide facility, opened in September, will have up to 150 workers on projects including the assembly of naval strike missiles.

The relationship between BAE and Kongsberg to develop the passive radio frequency sensor started in 2009, with a study into electronic warfare applications and products for the joint strike missile.

This was followed by studies assessing feasibility, power and weight, that were backed by Australian and Norwegian governments.