RAAF FIRST FLIGHT FOR NEW AIR TANKER

Australian Minister for Defence Materiel Jason Clare announced on 16th September that the A39-002 KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport has completed its first flight in Royal Australian Air Force service. The aircraft took off from RAAF Base Amberley at about 1040 for a 2 hours and 45 minutes long flight over Roma and the Sunshine Coast, before returning to RAAF Base Amberley. During the flight the eight personnel on board conducted a check of the aircraft’s systems and crew operating procedures.

Mr Clare said this flight was the next step towards the new air tanker entering service with the RAAF. “This is the most advanced tanker aircraft in the world. It is an important piece of equipment for our Air Force. It is an Airbus aeroplane which has been converted into a flying petrol station, which will allow our Hornets, Super Hornets, C-17s and Wedgetail to be refuelled in the air. It can carry more than 100 tonnes of fuel, and can itself be refuelled by another tanker mid-flight. This means these planes can fly further without having to return to base, making them more effective.”

Mr Clare said the aircraft is operated by Air Force’s No. 33 Squadron from RAAF Amberley. Personnel will now begin an intensive operational test and evaluation flying programme for the aircraft. Initial operational capability is expected in late 2012. The RAAF received two KC-30As during June 2011, with another two due to be handed over by the end of the year. Qantas Defence Services is currently converting the final A330-200 aircraft into a KC-30A tanker at its Brisbane Airport facility, for delivery in 2012.