

To the Editor
Australian

The article by Geoffrey Thomas in the Aviation section on Friday (“Bowser hitch for RAAF refuelling”, Aviation, 9/11) correctly outlined that there are risks being managed in the KC-30B tanker project, and also that the project is on track for first aircraft delivery early 2009, followed by achievement of Initial Operating Capability by the end of 2009. Unfortunately, the article incorrectly stated that the first aircraft was to be delivered early next year, giving the impression that the project was late. The original contracted date for first aircraft delivery, as signed in 2004, was December 2008, and this date has since moved to February 2009 to accommodate cockpit design changes.

Although the design is built on a foundation of a commercial aircraft platform, the development and certification of the refuelling modification is a technically complex project and Australia is the lead customer. At the time of contract signature, there were no off-the-shelf options available and other nations were also examining options for new refuelling tankers. This situation has not significantly changed today as both the UK and US tanker programs have been delayed and have yet to sign contracts. Risk is being prudently managed and Australia will be introducing this important capability into service well in advance of these other programs.

Sincerely,

Clive Rossiter

Air Vice-Marshal
Head Aerospace Systems Division

9 November 2007