



September 2020

Australian F-35A Project AIR6000 Phase 2A/B Planned Milestones and Key Achievements

Planned Milestones

Date	Event
Q4 2020	Flight Simulators 5 & 6 operational
Q4 2020	Pilot Fit Facility commissioned at RAAF Base Williamtown
December 2020	Planned F-35A Initial Operating Capability.
January 2021	2OCU commence training (first full F-35A conversion course)
March 2021	US Congressional Full Rate Production decision (System Development and Demonstration phase officially complete).
Q1 2021	77SQN commences F-35 operations
2021	An additional 15 aircraft accepted from Production
Ongoing to 2022	Completion of facilities and infrastructure work at RAAF Bases Williamtown and Tindal for operation and support.
Q1 2022	75SQN commences F-35 operations
December 2023	Planned F-35A Final Operating Capability.



Key Achievements

Date	Event
1999	AIR6000 is established to consider the 'whole of capability' options to replace the F/A-18A/B and F-111 fleets.
June 2002	Australia joins the System Development and Demonstration (SDD) Phase of the F-35 Program to gain insight into the aircraft's development and capabilities, without making a commitment to procure. Defence also continues to closely observe and evaluate alternative capabilities.
November 2006	First Pass approval of AIR6000 and approval to enter the Production, Sustainment and Follow-on Development (PSFD) phase of the F-35 Program. Joining the PSFD phase provides visibility of, and some influence over, development of the F-35 Program with no commitment to buy aircraft. Membership also grants further access to information beyond SDD and industry opportunities. Initial Operating Capability (IOC) is planned for 2015, with Final Operational Capability (FOC) planned for 2020.
March 2007	Government announces acquisition of 24 Super Hornets as a bridging air combat capability for the transition period between F-111 retirement and the F-35A aircraft's introduction into service. Super Hornets are to be operational by 2010 and supported for 10 years until planned F-35A FOC in 2023.
2009	Defence White Paper confirms commitment to 100 F-35A aircraft.
November 2009	Second Pass approval for Stage 1 of acquisition for an initial 14 F-35A aircraft and enabling elements in order to commence training. Defence scheduled to seek Cabinet approval in 2012 for the remaining aircraft under Stage 2. Government supports a change to a 2018 IOC and 2021 FOC.
March 2010	US F-35 Program reports that latest cost estimates are 15 per cent above the base estimate and, as such, in breach of the Nunn-McCurdy provisions of the US <i>Defense Authorisation Act</i> . This triggers a two-year program of reviews and, in conjunction with the Global Financial Crisis, sees a number of US F-35 production commitments deferred.
May 2012	Budget pressures and production schedule delays see the Australian Government announce a two-year deferral to the F-35A acquisition beyond the first two aircraft; IOC and FOC are equally affected. This triggers an Air Combat Capability Review to consider options to mitigate risks arising from the shift to a 2020 IOC and 2023 FOC.
May 2013	Government announces that the Air Combat Capability Review has been concluded and that the Government remains committed to the F-35A, with a planned IOC for the first operational squadron of 2020.
April 2014	Government approves AIR6000 PH2A/B Stage 2, comprising an additional 58 F-35A aircraft, facilities and support systems required to deliver an F-35A IOC of 2020 and FOC of 2023.
July 2014	First two Australian F-35A aircraft roll off the production line.
September 2014	First flight of an Australian F-35A aircraft.
December 2014	Australia's first two F-35A aircraft delivered to the RAAF and start operating at the international F-35A Pilot Training Centre in Arizona, US.
December 2014	The US F-35 Joint Program Office announces that Australia has been assigned



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	regional F-35 airframe and engine depot maintenance responsibilities.
February 2015	The Minister for Defence announces that BAE Systems Australia and TAE Aerospace are the successful Australian companies assigned regional depot maintenance responsibilities for F-35 airframe and engine respectively.
April 2015	Australia's first F-35A pilot completes training and is now qualified and instructing at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.
May 2015	Infrastructure and facilities work worth almost A\$1 billion officially commences at RAAF Base Williamtown where most of the F-35A aircraft will be based.
July 2015	The Department of the Environment and Energy approves F-35A flying operations at multiple bases around Australia.
July 2015	Australia's second F-35A pilot completes training.
September 2015	The RAAF completes the first fuel transfer from a RAAF KC30-A Multi-Role Tanker Transport aircraft to an F-35A at Edwards Air Force Base, US.
December 2015	The Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Defence and Trade announces an "Inquiry into the Planned Acquisition of the F-35 Lightning II" with submissions to close on 19 February 2016.
March 2016	Senate Inquiry Public Hearing on the F-35A acquisition.
June 2016	Two Australian F-35A pilots at Luke Air Force Base drop laser-guided 500 lb GBU-12 bombs for the first time, from non-Australian F-35A aircraft.
August 2016	First F-35 building construction is completed at RAAF Base Williamtown (Off-Board Information Systems Centre).
October 2016	The report from the Senate Inquiry on F-35A acquisition is published
November 2016	The US announces that four Australian companies (BAE Australia, Northrop Grumman Australia, RUAG and GE Aviation Australia) have won assignments across 10 Repair Technology Groups for F-35 component depot maintenance.
December 2016	An Australian F-35A (A35-002) conducts first in-flight weapons release during a sortie west of Luke Air Force Base, Arizona on 14 December 2016. The weapon released is a GBU-12, 500lb Paveway II Laser Guided Bomb.
January 2017	Production Lot 10 contract (includes eight Australian F-35As) agreed by US Gov't and Lockheed Martin at a unit price below US\$100 million for first time.
February 2017	Australia's first F-35A maintenance cadre starts training in the US.
March 2017	Australia's first two F-35A aircraft make their first appearance in Australia at the 2017 Australian International Airshow.
June 2017	Gov't tables its response to the Senate Inquiry report on F-35A acquisition.
July 2017	Official opening of the F-35A Off-Board Information Systems Centre at RAAF Base Williamtown.
August 2017	The third Australian F-35A aircraft receives its Australian-made vertical tail; F-35 Program surpasses 100,000 flying hours and Australia (BAE Systems Australia) is assigned F-35 Asia-Pacific Regional Warehouse facility as part of the Global Support Solution.
November 2017	Defence moves into Australia's F-35A Integrated Training Centre facility at RAAF Base Williamtown with the facility expected to be operational in 2018.



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December 2017	No. 3 Squadron ceases operation of F/A-18s and is established as Australia's first F-35A squadron.
March to August 2018	Australia's 3 rd to 8 th aircraft (part of Lot 10) begin flying operations at Luke Air Force Base. These aircraft have Block 3F mission system software installed.
August 2018	Australian Airworthiness Board for F-35A operations in Australia is convened at RAAF Base Williamtown.
August 2018	Configuration of the Autonomic Logistics Information System (ALIS) for the first two aircraft to be delivered to RAAF Base Williamtown, and finalisation of the connection of ALIS into the Defence Information Environment with appropriate sovereign data and cyber security provisions in place.
September	Sovereign Australian F-35 operations commence in the US including flights with Australia's KC-30A tanker aircraft to be used for refuelling en-route to Australia.
October 2018	RAAF Base Williamtown Integrated Training Centre – Maintenance Small Group Try Out commences. Australia's final Lot 10 aircraft – A35-010 – is delivered from the Lockheed Martin Fort Worth production line and ferried to Luke Air Force Base.
December 2018	AUS/UK Reprogramming Laboratory Phase 1 Hardware accepted.
December 2018	A35-009 and A35-010 ferried to Australia to be the first aircraft based in Australia.
Early 2019	Australia begins F-35A Verification and Validation testing and maintenance training in-country.
February 2019	Lot 14 Aircraft Long Lead contract awarded.
April 2019	A35-011 and A35-012 ferried to Australia.
June 2019	The first Joint Strike Fighter F135 engine module inducted into the Turbine Engine Maintenance Facility in south-east Queensland. Staff begin hands-on training.
July 2019	No. 3 Squadron conducts the first pilot transition training missions on the first Australian-based Transition course.
July 2019	Defence and Lockheed Martin Australia (LMA) sign a five-year contract worth AUD\$91 million in support of the F-35A capability. The logistics support contract combines a number of existing contracts formerly with LMA and the US F-35 Joint Program Office into a single, more manageable and cost-effective contract.
September 2019	Lot 11 aircraft A35-015 and A35-016 are ferried to Australia to join No. 3 Squadron at RAAF Base Williamtown.
October 2019	Aircraft A35-017 and A35-018 accepted by Australia.
October 2019	Prime Minister of Australia opens Quickstep Technologies new countermeasures composite flare housing facility in Sydney, extending Quickstep's support to the global F-35 Program.
October 2019	A Block Buy contract is signed by US Government and Lockheed Martin. Valued at USD\$34 billion, it is the largest single contract in US Defense history and covers 478 F-35 aircraft worldwide. For Australia, the contract will deliver 45 F-35A aircraft between 2020 and 2022, taking Australia's fleet to 63. The contracted unit price is now five per cent below the estimate at Government approval in 2014.
Late 2019	Lintek Pty Ltd, based in Queanbeyan NSW, develops an innovative manufacturing system that doubles its production capacity of printed circuit boards used in JSF



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	phased array radar and electronic warfare systems.
December 2019	Seven F-35A aircraft ferried from Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, to RAAF Base Williamtown, bringing the total number of F-35A aircraft in Australia to 13. Five remain at the international Pilot Training Centre in Arizona.
January 2020	2OCU stands-up as the Australian-based F-35A training unit for maintainers and pilots.
February 2020	Australia, Canada and UK Reprogramming Laboratory opens at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.
April 2020	Tindal 75SQN facility complete – IT installation commences.
April 2020	US awards a USD\$107.5 million contract to Victorian-based Chemring Australia for production of F-35 MJU-68 flares for the US, Australia and other user nations.
May 2020	Aircraft A35-001 passes 1,000 flying hours over the skies of Arizona, US.
June 2020	Four F-35A Full Mission Simulators operational at RAAF Base Williamtown are successfully upgraded by local experts to support the continued build-up of pilot training at No. 3 Squadron and 2OCU.
June 2020	TAE Aerospace's F135 fan module maintenance is qualified by Pratt & Whitney. First operational RAAF engine fan module is repaired in TAE's new Turbine Engine Maintenance Facility in South-East Queensland.
August 2020	Australia accepts 30 th F-35A aircraft from Lockheed Martin.