

MEDIA RELEASE

**Thales Australia to develop new carbon fibres for overwrapped gun barrels**

**Melbourne, Thursday 10 March 2022:** Leading defence contractor Thales Australia has entered into a collaboration with Deakin University and the Innovative Manufacturing Cooperative Research Centre (IMCRC) to develop a lightweight composite overwrap for gun barrels.

The 6-month, \$234,023 research and development (R&D) project will deliver a carbon fibre overwrap that will reduce the thickness of the gun barrel, resulting in a lighter product with increased precision.

Commenting on the project, Graham Evenden, Thales Australia's Director Integrated Weapons & Sensors, said the research collaboration would enable Thales to advance its in-country composite manufacturing capabilities.

"Currently, the intermediate modulus carbon fibres suited to the overwrap are only available from overseas supply chains that face frequent disruptions. By developing these fibres on Australian soil, Thales is establishing an innovative capability that can be applied to other small arms products across civil and defence sectors," he said.

"Thales will also work hand in glove with Deakin to train and upskill staff at our Lithgow Arms facility to work with composites, further contributing to sustainable growth within Australia's manufacturing sector."

Prof Russell Varley, Professor of Composite Materials at Deakin University, said the IMCRC activate collaboration would draw on local knowledge and expertise to meet the growing global demand for lightweight, high-performance components.

"Deakin, through its Carbon Nexus research centre, is excited to support Thales in the development of new carbon fibre materials which, once approved, will be used to produce a composite demonstrator at Thales Australia's Lithgow manufacturing facility," he said.

Dr Matthew Young, Manufacturing Innovation Manager at IMCRC, said Thales and Deakin's R&D would act as a testbed for future developments of Australian manufactured bespoke carbon fibres.

"This collaboration will develop a niche, high-quality product with significant export opportunities. By partnering with an Australian world-class research facility on composite materials, this project will directly support growth within a key national manufacturing priority area," he said.

"It's a prime example of the role shorter-term R&D collaborations can play in strengthening the future of defence manufacturing within Australia," he said.

This announcement follows Thales Australia's recent \$6.5 million commitment to transform its Lithgow Arms facility into a modern manufacturing and integration hub for the design, development and precision manufacture of next generation weapons systems.

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## **About IMCRC**

IMCRC is an independent and for-impact cooperative research centre with a successful, proven and scalable model for catalysing research and business partnerships that drives transformative commercial outcomes for participating Australian manufacturers. To date, IMCRC has successfully co-invested in more than 70 R&D projects, catalysing more than \$230 million in transformative manufacturing research. More information is available at [www.imcrc.org](http://www.imcrc.org).

IMCRC's activate program was introduced in 2020 to support shorter-term, industry-led research projects that help Australian manufacturers take action and gain a competitive edge in the post-COVID-19 world.

## **About Thales Australia**

Thales Australia is a trusted partner of the Australian Defence Force and is also present in commercial sectors ranging from air traffic management and ground transport systems to security systems and services. Thales Australia employs around 3,800 people directly and supports over 2,051 jobs along its Australian supply chain. In 2020 Thales Australia spent \$657 million with 1,841 Australia suppliers, of which 82% are SMEs. Since 2018 Thales Australia has spent over \$1.9 billion with local Australian businesses.

Thales Australia has a history of patient investment to build advanced in-country capability across manufacturing, critical systems and services. Close collaborative relationships with local customers, Australian SME suppliers and research institutions combined with technology transfer from our global business enables Thales to tailor high-quality solutions for Australian and export markets, generating revenue of \$1.6 billion in exports over the past 10 years.

## **About Deakin University**

Deakin is one of Australia's leading tertiary education providers, offering a personalised experience enhanced by world-class programs and innovative digital engagement. Deakin takes a connected approach to solving global challenges, translating high-quality research into powerful solutions, policies and capabilities.

### **For more information, please contact:**

Jana Kuthe, Communications, Marketing and Events Manager, IMCRC  
+61 416 735 666  
[jana.kuthe@imcrc.org](mailto:jana.kuthe@imcrc.org)