

Mediaportal Report

Press

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Australian, 18/01/08, Aviation, Page 29
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Clip Ref: **00032538797**

479 words

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Quickstep's first deal for WA factory

Steve Creedy
Aviation writer

COMPOSITES specialist Quickstep Holdings is giving the historic West Australian port of Fremantle a taste of 21st century aerospace technology.

The company has spent about \$6 million setting up its Fremantle headquarters with state of the art equipment to manufacture aircraft components, and already has its first contract.

While details of the contract are under wraps — Quickstep is saying only that it will manufacture a 2m auxiliary component for light aircraft — it opens the door to a fast-growing segment of the aerospace industry.

Quickstep chief executive Nick Noble said the composites business was booming but there were not many Australian companies in the field.

“The idea is that you use the money to buy the kit and now it’s time to find the contracts and make it work,” Mr Noble said.

“We’ve got our first contract and we’ve got a lot of good stuff coming up as well.”

The manufacturer has a contract to build five of the components, with the possibility of 200 more to come.

It is also out looking for more work in what is tipped to become a \$US30 billion (\$34 billion) global industry by 2026.

Quickstep has a proprietary process based on fluid-based curing that significantly cuts the cost and time involved in producing composite components.

It has six pilot plants around the world and global alliances with major international advanced materials suppliers.

It listed on the stock exchange in 2005 and last year undertook a \$17

million capital raising which included a 6 per cent investment by Macquarie Funds Management.

The move into aircraft component manufacturing prompted the company to recruit three senior production staff from Airbus and to re-engineer its Fremantle headquarters.

The appointments include composites veterans Keith Brand as clean-room team leader and Sean Scammell as his assistant.

This included bringing in a CATIA computer-aided design system and a Leica laser tracker used to measure and inspect patterns, tooling and parts.

Still on order are three autoclaves and a Breton five-axis machining centre, believed to be one of the most accurate of its kind in Western Australia.

Two large autoclaves will be used to make carbon composite tooling and production parts, while a smaller one will be used to make specialised silicon diaphragms for the Quickstep process.

“We’ve now got all the major capital items ordered up and there are a few short lead-time items that are about to be ordered up so they all come in at the same time,” Mr Noble said.

“And with all these new guys we’ve got virtually all the people we need. We’ve got one more guy that we’re chasing and that will sort all that out.

“So we’ll have the equipment, we’ll have the people, we’ll have the capability and we’ll be in business.”

Quickstep hopes to get the parts certified by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority in the first half of this calendar year.