

Flying high

Boeing Australia has achieved AS 9100 certification, the aerospace industry's quality management system standard, at its three sites that either support or conduct aircraft modification – Brisbane, Amberley and Williamtown. This article looks at the reasons for using the standard and how Boeing Australia approached its implementation.

As a customer-focused organisation, Boeing Australia places strong emphasis on business excellence. The company employs a process-based management approach and quality systems that are fully integrated into all elements of the business. These are key factors for a successful systems-focused organisation, and it was the strength of the company's existing systems, which were already certified to ISO 9001, that ensured a smooth path to AS 9100. In fact, many of Boeing Australia's systems were so robust that they met or surpassed AS 9100's more stringent requirements without further modification.

Journey to AS 9100

Boeing Australia uses mature, proven quality systems to achieve its mission: to help customers improve their business. The company's entire operations are certified to ISO 9001, and in 2003 they voluntarily stepped up to AS 9100 certification at three of their aerospace support sites:

- Boeing Australia Limited head office, Brisbane.
- Boeing Aerospace Support Centre (BASC) at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland.
- F/A-18 Hornet Upgrade (HUG) programme at RAAF Base Williamtown, New South Wales.

Boeing Australia's journey to AS 9100 began in late 2002 with a review of requirements. This was followed by gap analyses at each of the three sites, a Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance (LRQA) pre-assessment involving a clause-by-clause comparison of ISO 9001 and AS 9100, and a preliminary consideration of Boeing Australia's position, relative to the stringent AS 9100 requirements.

The pre-assessment service was commended by Boeing Australia's Director for Quality, Improvement and Innovation, Mr. Michael Whipps, as 'a true value-adding process' and revealed that most of the company's systems were already AS 9100 compliant.

The pre-assessment did, however, identify opportunities for improvement relating to procurement and supplier management. An organisation-wide education programme was subsequently developed to support the planning, documentation and implementation of more rigorous approaches to supplier assessment, review and management.

Mr. Les Blackwell, LRQA Systems Specialist, points out that the strength and quality of Boeing Australia's existing systems was integral to the smooth AS 9100 transition. He observes: "Boeing is a customer-focused organisation, with a strong emphasis on business excellence. Customer satisfaction is critical in the cutting-edge, technology-focused aerospace industry. Boeing's commitment to nailing down customers' requirements and then delivering nothing short of absolute customer satisfaction has been an entrenched element of the business for many years. Boeing Australia's business

excellence approach is focused entirely on performance. This in turn drives management performance towards continual improvement.”

At Boeing Australia, the process-based approach pervades the entire organisation. Vision support plans are used to map project objectives, and then provide feedback on the effectiveness of projects and processes.

”In terms of systems integration, Boeing Australia fully incorporates its systems and processes into day-to-day activities,” Mr. Blackwell comments. “The systems file isn’t kept in the cupboard – everything the company does, every day, adheres to proven and mature systems. These are all key factors for a successful systems-focused organisation. Boeing’s historical commitment to quality systems certainly smoothed the path to AS 9100.”

Boeing Australia’s business performance was recognised by the nation’s premier business awards, the Australian Business Excellence (ABE) Medal in 2003. The ABE framework instills leadership and process-based approaches to business improvement, and the company’s commitment to the framework supports a strong management climate for improvement.

This experience with the ABE, Lean Enterprise principles, and ISO 9001 – which Mr. Michael Whipps sees as ‘a critical foundation system and springboard to improvement’ – were critical to AS 9100 success.

A systems expert with AS 9100 experience from US parent, The Boeing Company, was utilised adding extra weight to the local project team’s decades of systems experience. Experience with ISO 9001:1994 was found to be particularly useful in meeting the prescriptive requirements of AS 9100. This depth of experience ensured that Boeing

AS 9100 and ISO 9001

AS 9100 is the aerospace industry’s quality management system standard. It is an expanded version of the ISO 9001 quality management standard, which recognises quality systems and acts as an international reference for quality requirements in business-to-business dealings.

Boeing Australia sees a number of benefits in working to an aerospace focused standard as AS 9100:

- has a strong international reputation
- is aligned with industry specific standards
- improves customer confidence
- ensures that industry specific criteria are met
- helps control and mitigate industry-specific risks.

The future of AS 9100 within the aerospace industry looks strong and Boeing Australia looks favourably upon AS 9100 certified suppliers.

For more information on these standards please visit www.lrq.com.au

Australia’s systems operated like clockwork when the three sites were audited by LRQA in early 2003. In March 2003, Boeing Australia became one of the country’s first organisations to achieve AS 9100 certification.

Boeing Australia now has set its sights on AS 9110 certification for all its maintenance operations, and it will continue to work with LRQA toward achieving other certifications, such as ISO 14001 for environmental management systems, which was recently achieved at the Exmouth site in Western Australia.



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The Boeing Company and Boeing Australia

Through mergers and acquisition, The Boeing Company has been involved in the Australian aircraft and defence businesses for more than 75 years and currently has nearly 3,000 employees throughout the country.

In the last five years, Boeing has invested \$A579 million in facilities, plant, equipment, and employment and training of Australians and technology transfer, \$265 million (1997-2001) in local research and development and has exported aero-structure components and high technology services worth some \$1.25bn.

Boeing Australia Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Boeing Company, is a high technology company specialising in design, development, manufacture and installation of complex defence and commercial systems. Boeing Australia is headquartered in Brisbane and employs more than 1800 staff in 16 locations around Australia supporting defence and other customers.

Boeing Australia’s capabilities include:

- systems integration and major defence project management
- software engineering, design, test and development
- aircraft weapons, avionics and EW systems
- aircraft assembly, modification, maintenance and support
- command, control and communications systems
- information and surveillance systems
- communications and information management systems
- through-life support for major defence equipment and systems
- integrated logistics support
- operation and maintenance of defence communications and support facilities
- manufacture of aerostructure components and electronics systems.

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