

Extra Bushmasters see Land 4111 all wrapped up

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF an additional 268 new-build Bushmasters for the Australian Army on 27 April will effectively meet the primary requirements of the Land 4111 project.

Established several years ago to upgrade and/or replace the Bushmaster protected mobility vehicle (PMV) fleet, the extra Bushmasters will essentially capture Land 4111, extending the life-of-type of Bushmaster in Army service and evolving the fleet to meet emerging needs.

The AUD\$750 million contract for Thales Australia essentially closes off any prospect of an open competition that might have sought a Bushmaster replacement under Land 4111.

The 268 new Bushmasters will significantly boost, Defence stated, the ADF's "combat capability and force projection, as part of a modernised protected mobility fleet able to operate in our immediate region". Bushmasters have become an important component of the integrated force and will perform key functions in littoral manoeuvre, long-range fires and within the amphibious capable combined arms land system.

The contract represents the largest single order for Bushmaster since the initial 299-unit order placed in 1999.

Deliveries of the new vehicles, in up to eight variants, will commence in 2027 and run through to 2033.

The Albanese Government has also agreed for recently delivered Bushmasters – 25-30 vehicles – to be sold to the Netherlands. This export provides further certainty to the Bendigo workforce, with Thales to replace these vehicles for the Australian Defence Force in their next production round at no cost and in addition to this latest new order for the Army.

The manufacture of these Bushmasters adds to the vehicles already being built to replace those gifted to Ukraine



ABOVE: From 2027, the Australian Army will begin receiving the next-generation Bushmaster 5.6 variant, with deliveries at a rate of approximately 40 per year.

Image: Thales

and 59 vehicles being acquired under Land 8113.

Described as a next-generation Bushmaster (also known as Bushmaster 5.6), the new vehicles will feature a number of enhancements such as more armoured protection, better mobility, advanced digital systems, more electrical power and an increased ability to meet evolving operational needs through additional payload capacity for carrying personnel, increased towing capacity, ability to

carry more powerful weapons systems, including roof-mounted effectors, a modular crew cabin allowing for versatile configurations based on user needs and latest-generation communications interfaces. Thales unveiled a left-hand drive Bushmaster variant in February this year to cater for export markets.

In total, more than 1,400 Bushmasters have been manufactured at the Bendigo facility to date, with the vehicle being exported to eight nations including the UK, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Japan.

The Government is also putting AUD\$450 million towards upgrades of the Hawkei light PMV and the Rheinmetall medium/heavy truck fleets as part of the 2026 *Integrated Investment Program's* protected mobility vehicle modernisation program.

The Hawkei modernisation work, about which no technical details were provided, will be conducted by Thales in Brisbane, supporting 150 more jobs across the local supply chain. **DTR**

- Ian Bostock