

Speaker 1: This is Voices of QueensLAND400.

Anthony Frangi: Hello, and welcome to Voices of QueensLAND400 podcast, episode two. I'm Anthony Frangi.

Queensland is Australia's gateway to the growth markets of the Asia Pacific, and with Australia's land defence operations becoming increasingly northern-focused, Queensland's military presence is growing. This presence is supported by significant and capable local industry, not just in South East Queensland, but right across the state, including the key regional centres of Rockhampton and Townsville. Rheinmetall Defence Australia has chosen Queensland as the preferred location for its Australia-New Zealand Headquarters and Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence, part of its LAND 400 Phase 2 bid to the Department of Defence. And according to Rheinmetall Managing Director Gary Stewart, Queensland is the ideal location to build a new generation of armoured vehicles to protect Australian soldiers for a number of reasons.

Gary Stewart: Rheinmetall selected Queensland after an exhaustive process of looking at a range of different factors, which were important in determining where and why we would set up a military vehicle centre of excellence. And we looked at this from the perspective of, wherever we set up, it has to be somewhere that allows us to be able to design, test, manufacture, and support complex military vehicles for the next 30 to 40 years. When we looked at all of the various factors, Queensland came out very strongly. South East Queensland, as a region, has one of the largest populations of skilled workers in the nation, so access to people in a desirable location where they want to live was a feature. The fact that they can afford to live there is also important, so cost of living, affordability, traffic congestion, whilst intangible, make it important as something to be able to attract people from elsewhere within Australia and around the world.

Global access as well, so an international airport with excellent connections into the region and back into Europe was important to support technology transfer. Sixty percent of the Australian Army, our primary user and customer being in the state, also incredibly important. Access to an industry with all of the requisite skills and pedigree, not just in heavy vehicle engineering, but when we look at what's in this area for aerospace and avionics, biomedical technology, utilities and power, they all have the underlying technical and professional skills that apply nicely into a military vehicle industry setting. And then finally, the Queensland Government themselves, and their commitment and their advocacy and their sharing of the vision that South East Queensland and Queensland more broadly has a bright future for a military vehicle industry.

Anthony Frangi: Gary says the key differentiator is that Rheinmetall already has a great association with South East Queensland.

Gary Stewart: Rheinmetall is already delivering our LAND 121 military trucks out of South East Queensland, in Wacol. So, we already have a credible and capable industry network here: Holmwood Highgate, Penske, NIOA Trading. And

with that confidence, we then also look beyond that to see who else is operating in this space. We've got Raytheon, Elbit, Harris Technologies. We've got Boeing. Very large defence primes have got the confidence and the investment into this region, to say there is already available workforce of skilled people, both technical and professional skills, and the state has the highest forecast economic growth of all the states over the next period. So, all of this gives us confidence that we're going to be able to set up, we're going to be able to deliver, and we're going to be able to continue to thrive in South East Queensland.

**Anthony Frangi:** The RAAF Base at Amberley is the largest operational Air Force base in Australia, and is currently undergoing a \$1.5 billion transformation. Mal Lane is Executive for Defence and Aerospace Development with the Queensland Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, and says the RAAF Base at Amberley provides an ecosystem of skills, manufacturing, and sustainment capability for the LAND 400 project.

**Mal Lane:** The LAND 400 Phase 2 vehicles will transit to overseas operations quickly through Amberley, or alternatively, out of Townsville, through the amphibious deployment from there. Importantly, RAAF Base Amberley and the industry that surrounds it provides an ecosystem of skills, manufacturing, and sustainment capability. And this corridor extends from Amberley, right through the western corridor, through Wacol, out to the Brisbane airport. LAND 400 vehicles are complex and sophisticated platforms, requiring a very well-trained and skilled workforce. The variety of skill sets required to deliver these vehicles is already available, thanks to the heavy vehicle precinct we have around that area. And this is complementary to the workforce that supports the aerospace industry, which is also very strong through that area. The high-end integration, the sophisticated componentry, the complex military platforms that they are, and the high-tech end of those, the aerospace sector is very complementary to these really high-tech military vehicles that LAND 400 Phase 2 will be bringing to Australian service.

**Anthony Frangi:** Gary Stewart from Rheinmetall says the investment into Amberley provides a significant boost to the LAND 400 project.

**Gary Stewart:** The investment into Air Force Base Amberley is recognition of its role as a strategic global lift capability for the Air Force. It's also where, if Army has to deploy, using the C-17 or those aircraft, they'll deploy from Amberley. So, having a military vehicle centre and industrial base that is on that Brisbane-Amberley corridor makes it very accessible for both industry and for the military to take advantage of it. So, there's a real operational benefit to the investment in Amberley, but also the role that Amberley services for the Australian Defence Force.

The more interesting benefit, I think, for industry and for combat vehicle programs is, when you look at the technologies that are going into our Boxer combat reconnaissance vehicle, and into our infantry fighting vehicle, those technologies are actually much closer to an Air Force jet aircraft than they

are to a truck. And so, having access to the types of people, technologies, and industries that service the Air Force Base Amberley, both in terms of jet fighter equipment, but also in simulation and training. They're all the skills, and they're all the technologies and services that we're going to need, and that the Australian Defence Force is going to need, for the combat reconnaissance vehicle. So, we think it's an ideal marriage, and an ideal arrangement, to be located close to that type of investment.

Anthony Frangi: NIOA is Australia's largest privately-owned company, supplying weapons, ammunition, and technical support to commercial, military, and law enforcement markets. With its headquarters in Brisbane, NIOA's state-of-the-art, high-security facility currently delivers some exciting technology for the Australian Government Department of Defence. Here's Managing Director, Robert Nioa.

Robert Nioa: Our most recent prime contract was the delivery of the new automatic grenade launcher to the Department of Defence, and we've just successfully completed the delivery of that, and the units have been distributed and are now operationally ready. We've also been doing the Colt M4 weapons for the Australian Special Forces. We've just won some contracts for the New Zealand Defence Force, to replace their sniper rifles, Glock pistols for New Zealand, and we've been working on the ... We just won two very large ammunition contracts. MMC, the Major Munitions Contracts, and LAND 17, which is an artillery contract.

Anthony Frangi: Your headquarters in Brisbane has been described as "a state-of-the-art, high-security facility." What makes it so unique?

Robert Nioa: We developed the facility in conjunction with the Defence Security Authority, from the ground up, selecting the preferred land that they wanted. We've incorporated all levels of logistics to do with ammunition and weapons, everything from storage, maintenance, and testing all under the one roof. The facility houses the only indoor cannon firing range in Australia. It's also got our engineering task force that we've developed to support the munitions contracts that we've just recently won.

Anthony Frangi: NIOA is currently delivering some really exciting new technology for the Department of Defence. How will these products assist the Defence Force?

Robert Nioa: We've been able to deliver the most modern automatic grenade launcher in the world to the Department of Defence, with a very complex sighting system. So that's increasing the effectiveness of our infantry and Special Forces troops around the world. And we've recently won a very complex project for new artillery ammunition, which is going to increase the range and lethality of the infantry capability that the Australian Army has.

Anthony Frangi: Robert says NIOA can play a significant role in the LAND 400 Phase 2 contract, should it come to Queensland.

Robert Nioa: It's the largest land-based defence contract that's ever been awarded, and if it is awarded to Queensland, will be the start of a much bigger set of export

opportunities, and will really drive an industrial base around the vehicle not only in the manufacture, but the maintenance, ongoing sustainment. And I think that the economic benefits will go on beyond 40 years in this state, so there are very few commercial products or projects which would give such long-term and sustainable economic benefit to an economy. As we transition from reliance on some traditional manufacturing to move into the defence manufacturing space, which is very high-tech and high-skilled and high-dollar, it's extremely relevant to transforming the economy of our state and building the skills in our young people and engineers.

And Rheinmetall, particularly, understand the need for integration into the global supply chain, and to develop those skills in young Queenslanders, which are going to be used around the world and in products which will be seen around the world. It also allows the local workforce to be integrated into a global network of very high-tech engineering companies, and research and development units, which are housed in multiple companies which Rheinmetall are involved in. So, we will learn from them, and we will export our skills around the world. The initial LAND 400 bid, if Rheinmetall is successful in Queensland, is only the first of a couple of stages. The next stages, I believe, are going to be even more substantial than the initial LAND 400 award.

Anthony Frangi: What part will NIOA play in the LAND 400 Phase 2 contract?

Robert Nioa: So, we're a predominantly weapons and ammunition company, and as such, the weapon and ammunition components of the vehicle will be the responsibility to deliver of NIOA, our company. That's going to mean employment of several people in our Brisbane facility, and the establishment and expansion of our maintenance facility, to assemble the cannon and all of the complex components which are under the armour, which is the dual feeder assembly for the cannon. And then we'll do the testing and initial qualification, so we will fire that in our test range. And we will also set up the domestic manufacture for the supply of the training ammunition, and also import certain high-tech ammunition, and conduct the introduction into service engineering work in Australia, all of which will be coordinated from our Brisbane office. We would also look to include the manufactured ammunition into, back through Rheinmetall's global supply chain, and create export opportunities.

Anthony Frangi: Harris Corporation has been a leader in technology and innovation for more than 120 years, especially in the area of technical communications. Harris Defence Australia has chosen Queensland as its Australian headquarters, and according to Alan Callaghan, president and Managing Director of Harris Defence Australia, Queensland has the high-technology platforms of the ADF, and looks forward to playing a role in the LAND 400 project.

Alan Callaghan: Queensland contains a lot of the high-technology platforms of the ADF. Moreover, there's a lot of retired people, or people of ex-servicemen move to Queensland. Queensland is, we believe, the networking centre, has very high-quality engineers. It's a good place to attract the highest caliber of folk. We've evolved from a company that really developed in photocopying and

then in HF, to now a multi-disciplinary company that offers all spectrums of defence work. In particular, in the communications area, we produce the most sophisticated and complex radios in the world, and we service somewhere around 140 countries with those radios. And we've evolved, now, not from just supplying the radios, but supplying the whole network and the network architecture.

Anthony Frangi: Alan, Harris is one of a number of expanding global companies in Brisbane, growing the C4ISREW capability not only in the state, but as a location in Australia. Can you speak about the importance of relationships with Elbit Systems, Boeing, and local SMEs for projects such as LAND 200 and JP2072?

Alan Callaghan: Harris is a firm believer in the power of collaboration, not just with the Department, but with other peer companies and SMEs. So, we have strategic relationships with Boeing Defence Australia, and we have an over/under contractual arrangement in terms of the network, so we have an integrated solution through the whole architecture. In terms of Elbit, we are also a partner with Elbit, and Elbit provides the Battle Management System, which we integrate and put onto our network. We also have relationships with a number of SMEs, to execute those two programs. The LAND 400 program is an extremely important program to the ADF. Whoever is chosen, Harris will work with that vendor to perform systems integration, design, and bring and equip those vehicles to become nodes in the network.

Anthony Frangi: If Rheinmetall is the successful bidder, its location in Queensland will complement Queensland's existing land defence and heavy vehicle manufacturing capabilities. Queensland offers an unmatched combination of competitive advantages uniquely suited to LAND 400 in building a new generation of armoured vehicles to protect our soldiers.

We invite you to join us here, in Queensland, Australia's home of land defence. If you would like more information about Queensland's commitment to LAND 400, you can contact us through the Defence Industries Queensland website.

Thanks for listening to Voices of QueensLAND 400, episode two. In our next podcast, how Queensland has become the high-tech and innovative hub in Australia. I'm Anthony Frangi, with music supplied by Bensound.com.