

Question on notice no. 32

Portfolio question number: 33

2017-18 Additional estimates

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Defence Portfolio

Senator Kimberley Kitching: asked the Department of Defence on 28 February 2018—

Senator KITCHING: When will the repurposed jet be put into service?

Air Marshal Davies: That aircraft is going through its modification in Spain at the moment. We expect to have that aircraft in Australia by late 2019.

Senator KITCHING: Is it at a preliminary stage of the refit?

Air Marshal Davies: I will get back to you with the specifics, Senator, but it takes us about a year and a half to do the upgrade because the air-to-air refuelling part takes about a year and a half to do. That only began about six months ago.

Air Vice Marshal Roberts: We've just finished the tanker upgrade, and it has gone to corporate jet in Lufthansa in Hamburg. It's going through the GTC upgrades as of about a week ago. It has actually commenced that upgrade in Hamburg in Germany.

Answer —

Government approved the acquisition of two ex-Qantas leased A330-200 aircraft and conversion to KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft in mid-2015. These aircraft completed their MRTT conversion in April 2017 (sixth MRTT) and August 2017 respectively (seventh MRTT).

In early 2016 the Government approved modifying one of the two additional MRTT aircraft with a Government Transport and Communications (GTC) capability. The seventh MRTT aircraft was subsequently selected for this modification.

In September 2017 the sixth MRTT aircraft entered service with the RAAF.

The seventh MRTT aircraft was inducted for the GTC modification at Lufthansa Technik facility in Hamberg Germany in October 2017 after completing its MRTT modification.

The seventh MRTT, with the GTC modification completed, is expected to enter RAAF service late 2019. This will increase the current RAAF fleet from six to seven, significantly enhancing the ADF's air to air refuelling capability. In addition, the GTC capability will provide Government with a long haul and secure communications capability to support international engagement.