



BAE SYSTEMS CONSOLIDATES R&D UNDER RED OCHRE LABS

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BAE SYSTEMS AUSTRALIA

ised,” Yelland said. “We went through a process essentially that said rather than working out how much we think we can afford to spend on technology, let’s work back from our strategy. What do we want to achieve? Where do we want to be in 20-30 years’ time as a business? How do we want to be supporting our Defence customer in 20-30 years’ time and what will they need over the next 20-30 years’? Work out where the technology gaps are, work out when you need to start investing in addressing those technology gaps and that then determines when and how much you need to spend.

“We can’t do everything, so we’ve got to really be focused on which areas we invest in and we’ve identified five or six key areas that not only deliver technology that is going to be of benefit to our customer in the future, but technology that aligns with the capabilities that we’ve got and the opportunities that are coming in the short term through to the long term.”

Priorities being targeted include unmanned systems, autonomy and robotics, smart sats, data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), advanced sensors including HF and EW, hypersonics, advanced weapons and countermeasures and sustainment technologies including prognostic health management. The company is looking to leverage opportunities where BAE Systems Australia has a natural advantage that will complement existing business both in Australia and internationally.

“You’ve got to be able to recover any investment that you make as a commercial company. Much as I’d love to, you can’t just invest in the things that are really, really cool to do. You have to invest in things that have a reason, a strategy behind them and therefore a route to market.”

FOR more than 65 years, BAE systems Australia has been expanding its capabilities across multiple defence domains. With work being pursued and executed across the entire defence business spectrum, the company has made the strategic move to consolidate its suite of Research and Development (R&D) efforts under a single banner, Red Ochre Labs.

“With the acceleration in technology in recent years, we decided to do two things,” Brad Yelland, BAE systems Australia’s Chief Technology Officer explained to ADM. “One was to change the way that we focus on technology and instead of breaking up a budget and spreading it around the business and having each individual line of business work out what they wanted to invest in, we decided to centralise everything and have it strategy led to increase its impact.

“The second part was if we now have a centralised technology area, an area where we do all the technology and early product development activities, then why don’t we give it a name?”

Akin to Lockheed Martin’s Skunk Works or Boeing’s Phantom Works, Red

Ochre Labs aims to capture the Australian R&D effort resident in BAE Systems. Picking the name of such a distinctively Australian business, Yelland wanted to evoke a sense of country to tie their increased efforts in with their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

“Whenever you see a picture of a landscape with red earth, you pretty much know that it’s Australia. And when you have a look at a lot of the products that we work on like JORN, Nulka flight trials, like the UAV work we’ve done, the M113 work we’re doing now, photos show that red earth in the background. Red Ochre really says Australia.”

BAE Systems Australia spends roughly between \$10-\$15 million annually on advanced technology development and is looking to align its programs and partnerships with the capability decisions that Defence is making.

“We’ve really increased it fivefold in the last three years since we central-

ABOVE: Red Ochre Labs will also be supporting BAE Systems Australia’s largest programs like the Hunter class.