

Boeing's amazing unmanned air vehicle, ScanEagle, could be trialled in the new Kingaroy test centre.

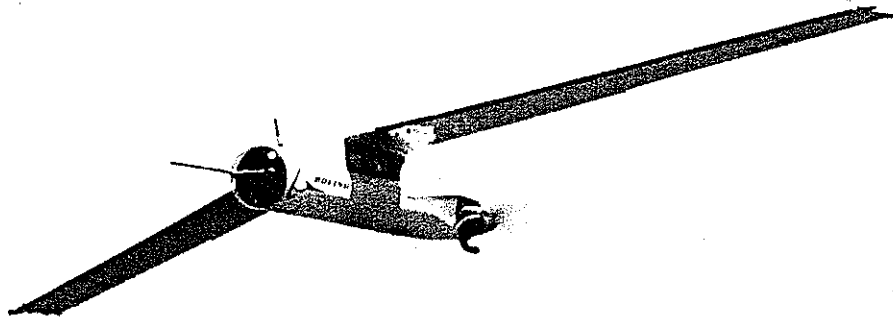


Image: Boeing.

WORLD CENTRE FOR UNMANNED AIRCRAFT

The Queensland Government will further expand the state's booming aviation hub with two major developments involving unmanned aircraft, Premier Peter Beattie announced on his US trade roadshow last month.

He also announced \$3.53million in funding to QUT towards the creation of a \$12 million Australian Research Centre for Aerospace Automation at the Da Vinci Precinct at Brisbane Airport.

"We will provide funding to help make Brisbane the Australian centre for research and development of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles – or UAVs as they are known," Mr Beattie said. "And Kingaroy Airfield, with access to a vast amount of sparsely populated airspace, will be used as a flight operations and test centre for UAVs. Queensland University of Technology and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation are working with the Queensland Government and several other organisations to establish Queensland as a world-wide centre for UAV system development.

"Boeing Australia strongly endorses this project and will participate in the initiative. UAVs comprise a significant aerospace research and development opportunity that is not being pursued by any other State.

State Development and Innovation Minister Tony McGrady said of the new research centre: "Research will focus on development and commercialisation of UAVs in Queensland, with safe civilian applications including coastal surveillance, power line inspection, precision farming and remote sensing. This centre will create an ideal environment for

QUT and the CSIRO to develop a critical mass of world-class researchers to lead civil UAV research.

"The \$3.53million will be used to construct a purpose-built facility, including laboratories and test equipment, research space for 40 research and development staff, and a hangar for assembly, testing and other uses. It will also support an outdoor operational laboratory for ground-based operations and low-level hovering operations, and acquisition and equipping of a mobile operations centre for sustained remote-area UAV flight testing."

Mr Beattie said QUT had applied for funding from the State Government under the Smart State Research Facilities Fund and it was particularly appropriate for the announcement to be made in Philadelphia last month.

"QUT held a major function here to publicise its expertise in biotechnology so I was able to congratulate vice-chancellor Peter Coaldrake and other senior QUT personnel on their success in obtaining the \$3.53million. And immediately afterwards I met senior executives of the Boeing Corporation which has strongly recommended the establishment of Kingaroy as a flight operations and test centre.

"An area of 30 nautical miles wide, 300 nautical miles long and up to a 50,000ft ceiling to the north-west of Kingaroy will be designated a UAV test and training area. There will also be a 'common user' UAV facility at Kingaroy airfield as part of this initiative.

"Globally, this market is recognised to be the next revolution in aviation as information technology matures in the aerospace sector." ■