

# ACS Australia hits 30

Advanced Composite Structures Australia: 30 years of transforming design and manufacturing ideas into reality.

For over 30 years, the team at Advanced Composite Structures Australia (ACS Australia) has been delivering high-value engineering and manufacturing solutions of unique composite materials related products for clients based around the world. Originally under the constellation of a Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), and later as a private entity, ACS Australia is headquartered in Port Melbourne and is celebrating 30 years of operation.

ACS Australia has expanded into series manufacture and assembly of high-value, composite products and has made strategic investments into advanced manufacturing equipment including automated machining and additive manufacturing. Recently, ACS Australia was awarded a Defence Global Competitiveness Grant to support the development of Australia's sovereign capability in Ultra-High Temperature Composites for hypersonic aerospace structures. While Defence and aerospace clients are among their largest customers, ACS Australia is also contributing to three major renewable energy and aquaculture projects as a proud partner of the Blue Economy Cooperative Research.

Their long-standing commitment to composites technology development has enabled ACS Australia's team members to develop products in almost every industry sector including transportation, mining, energy and civil infrastructure. It has been their mission to advance composites technology and deliver world-leading engineering services, which has seen an impressive 30 years of contribution from hundreds of people.

It was in 1990 that the seeds were sown for what is now ACS Australia. This was when the then Chief Scientist of Australia – Ralph Slatyer, AC, proposed to the Commonwealth Government that Australia needed a Cooperative Research Centres program to better facilitate industry-focused research and innovation.

The leaders in the aerospace structures design and manufacturing industry and their research and development partners in universities and government quickly came together and formulated a successful proposal for the Cooperative Research Centre for Aerospace Structures (CRC-AS) – one of the first 15 formally established in 1991.

It was in early 1992 that work started in earnest under the leadership of Gordon Long as Technical Director from the then Aeronautical Research Laboratories (ARL), now the Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG). Key directors on the new board came from Hawker de Havilland (HdH) and AeroSpace Technologies of Australia (ASTA), both now Boeing Aerostructures Australia (BAA).

The CRC-AS expanded in 1997 and focussed on advanced composite materials and became the CRC for Advanced Composite Structures (CRC-ACS), with the leadership passing to Ian Mair as CEO and new members joining the group, including Australian Defence Industries (ADI), now Thales Australia.

In 2003, Murray Scott took over as CEO and led the well-established CRC-ACS team into its third term, and subsequent expansion in 2007 to include helicopter structures

and then the final fourth term from 2010 to 2015, when Airbus in Australia and Europe, and also Petronas in Malaysia, became members. Some major milestones were achieved over this twelve-year period, some of which were returns on investments made years earlier.

The team received several major awards with the highlight being the recognition for developing, maturing and implementing key technologies for the Boeing 787 wing trailing edge moveables program. The key composites technologies that were successfully transitioned into the industrial environment were liquid resin infusion, double-diaphragm forming, component co-curing, post-buckling design, bird-strike simulation and optimum repair design. The continuing success of the manufacturing activities at Boeing's Port Melbourne facility is testament to the impact of this initial work.

It was in 2008 that the rapidly growing commercial activities were formalised by the establishment of the original spin-out company, Advanced Composite Structures Australia – a wholly-owned subsidiary of CRC-ACS, with Murray Scott as Managing Director, who is still currently Chairman and has been involved from the very beginning. This entity was restructured in 2010, with Tony Carolan as Chairman and Bill Schofield as Deputy Chairman (2010 - present) together with Tony Carolan as Chairman (2010 – 2016), to formally position it as the successor to CRC-ACS when it concluded its mission after 24 years. As part of this process, the ownership was passed in 2014 to the then directors and employees of ACS Australia, who were charged with leading the company into a fully commercial future. This responsibility is now being carried by Paul Falzon in the lead role of General Manager, together with Rodney Thomson as Engineering Manager, Andre Duarte as Business Development Manager, and Tess Kirkpatrick as Administration Manager.

The team is now celebrating three decades of incredible achievement in advanced composites research and translation of new technologies and capabilities to innovative industry partners. At the core of the unique organisation are some of the key people who kicked it all off over 30 years ago working alongside a young talented team still engaging in cutting-edge research and practical implementation in products and services. [acs-aus.com](http://acs-aus.com)

