

Boxer hits town to reinforce ADF bid



PROMOTIONAL MISSION: TEI business development manager Adam Packer and Rheinmetall managing director Gary Stewart on a Boxer CRV. Picture: WESLEY MONTS

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A 35-TONNE armoured vehicle could bring extra jobs to Townsville if the company behind it wins a \$5 billion Defence contract.

Manufacturer Rheinmetall Defence Australia has brought its Boxer combat reconnaissance vehicle to town, showcasing the vehicle to companies interested in joining the supply chain if they win the lucrative con-

tract. The company is bidding for the contract, part of the Australian Defence Force's Land 400 project.

If their bid is successful they have committed to design, build and maintain 225 Boxers in Queensland to create the next generation of armoured military vehicles.

Rheinmetall Defence Australia managing director Gary Stewart said during their roadshow around the state, they wanted to meet as many small and medium-sized enterprises as possible.

"This follows our decision to select Queensland as the future site of our Military Vehicle

Centre of Excellence, a new state-of-the-art facility that will deliver military vehicles and systems to Australian Defence Force programs," he said.

Herbert MP Cathy O'Toole said the technical expertise the vehicle would bring to the Defence Force was second to none.

"What's really impressive about this and Rheinmetall's bid is it is about bringing jobs to Townsville and that is so important," she said.

"It's going to give the existing companies the opportunity to expand and to deliver a range of products.

"It's going to give us op-

portunities for our veterans and ex-service personnel ... and this is going to create some apprenticeships and traineeships for our young people and that's really important for our economy at the moment."

Engineering company TEI Services is among the Townsville businesses hoping to be part of the construction process.

General manager Richard Parker said working on the Boxers would be a big win for the company.

"We'd obviously have to bring some more skills into the company and depending

on how much of it we got we'd have to employ more people," he said.

"It gives us job security for our existing people."

Thuringowa MP Aaron Harper said yesterday it made sense for Townsville to be involved in the manufacturing and maintenance of the vehicles, as it was home to Australia's largest military base.

"What I like about today is there's a bipartisan approach from all sides of government," he said.

The vehicle will be on display today on The Strand between 9am and 12pm.

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