

## Australia a Prime Market for Blackshape

LSA manufacturer Blackshape is ready to start shipping their slick two-seat Prime into Australia.

Australia is about to come under attack from a new Italian LSA as Bari-based Blackshape Aircraft prepares to launch the stylish Prime LSA onto the market.

The Prime is a low-wing, tandem-seat aircraft that has the looks of a high-speed military trainer along the lines of a Pilatus PC-21, Embraer Super Tucano or the Beechcraft T-6 Texan II.

But whereas all those aircraft are turbines, the Blackshape Prime is dragged along by a 100-hp Rotax 912 ULS or 115-hp turbo-charged 914 engine. Still, the books say the Prime has a maximum cruise of 150 knots.

Until now, the Prime has been restricted to very few countries, but the manufacturers have been eyeing-off Australia for some time, and are now ready to pounce with an aeroplane they say is unique and will be attractive to pilots over here.

"It is the fastest aeroplane in its category," Managing Director Angelo Petrosillo told *Australian Flying*.

"It is the best equipped in terms of safety features. It has a ballistic parachute provided standard, S-mode transponder, 21 circuit breakers, back-up fuel pump, certified wiring and connectors, certified radio. So, the equipment, the features and the performance are the top of the market."

Blackshape is a young

company; the Prime first flew only 10 years ago, and the first ready-to-fly aircraft was introduced to the world at Aero Friedrichshafen in 2009. As such, they have quickly embraced new construction technologies, which contribute significantly to the appearance and performance of the Prime.

Petrosillo: "There are no other aeroplanes in the category 100% prepregged, carbon-fibre made. The Prime is made of the same materials, and by the same processes, as the B787 Dreamliner, A380 and Eurofighter Typhoon."

As most manufacturers working in composite material have found, the workability of composite gives them freedom to take full advantage of aerodynamic shapes that would be hard to achieve with traditional metal.

The smooth, stylish profile of the Prime led to it being given a very Italian nick-name.

"The term 'Ferrari of the Sky' was made by Mr Luca Di Montezemolo, the former President of Ferrari," Petrosillo says proudly, "because of the Italian technology, Italian style, Italian taste for an unknown concept of flying."

"You have really the feeling that you are flying yourself. The look and feel is that of a fighter plane, and the behaviour is pretty sharp in manoeuvring, but sleek and sweet as well."

Blackshape is confident they have the product to capture decent market share in Australia, and believe that local pilots will quickly warm to the Prime.

"We foresee a very big market here because people need something fast, safe and looks really

stylish; either to get a new aeroplane into their private fleet, or to look at something new after 30 years of nothing new coming on the market."

The company launched their Prime assault on Australia by first securing LSA certification through Recreational Aviation Australia (RAAus). In a move that general aviation would like to see duplicated for them, RAAus simply

market. Don't expect any apologies for that from Petrosillo.

"We should be aggressive," he says, "because there is nothing like the Prime. It is our responsibility to be the best on the market, the best in after-sales, the best in service, the best on everything."

Not a company to stand still, Blackshape is also close to introducing the world to their "skunkworks"

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accepted the Canadian certificate rather than put the aircraft through their own hoops.

Blackshape is poised to deliver the first four aircraft in Australia as demonstrators. After that, they intend to stock the aeroplane here to cut down on the 90-day lead time from the plant in Monopoli, Bari.


Coupled with a special opening discount to the €169,000 asking price, it is clear that Blackshape is being aggressive with its plans for the Australian

project in October: the very impressive BK160 general aviation aircraft. With similar looks to the Prime, the BK160 will be FAR23-certified and powered initially by a 160-hp Lycoming motor, with plans for an upgrade within the first six months after being released, most likely to 180 or 200 hp.

The BK160 is projected to have a top speed of 170 knots, putting it in the range of the fastest two-seat GA planes around.

"It's a different aeroplane than the Prime: bigger, wider, taller," Petrosillo explains. "It's a FAR23 general aviation aircraft, but the soul comes from the Prime."

"Very demanding pilots who are tired of flying 50-year-old planes will want a BK160, looking for something with more performance, the best on the market, the top of the general aviation standard, but with a competitive price."

Whether it be with the Prime LSA or the BK160, Blackshape seems intent on presenting alluring designs that will surely attract significant interest. 

Looking very much like the paradigm of fighter trainers, the Blackshape Prime is sure to turn an eye or two in Australia.

