

Martin Hamilton-Smith

Minister for Defence Industries

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Defence assets should be Australian made

In the lead up to Australia Day, the Minister for Defence Industries Martin Hamilton-Smith has urged the Federal Government to build the nation's key Defence assets in Australia.

"Australia Day is all about national pride and it is a good time for us to think about what is best for Australia and in particular, Australian workers," Mr Hamilton-Smith said.

"There are a number of unanswered questions we are hoping to get clarity on with the upcoming release of the Defence White Paper.

"At the top of the list is the future of naval ship and submarine building in Australia.

"We hope the White Paper will reveal a robust plan for continuous ship and submarine building here in Australia and provide surety for defence manufacturing workers that there will be ongoing jobs for them in their home country.

"The first step towards securing the long term future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry is fast tracking the Offshore Patrol Vessel program and mandating the vessels are built in South Australia."

The first phase of the Offshore Patrol Vessel program will be the replacement of 14 Armidale Class Patrol Boats with approximately twelve 2000 tonne vessels.

"The Offshore Patrol Vessel project is critical to Australia's naval shipbuilding future.

"Building the Offshore Patrol Vessels in South Australia will ensure the core knowledge and skills developed through the Air Warfare Destroyer program are retained, de-risking the larger, more complex Future Frigate project due to kick-off at Techport Australia in 2020.

"Building them here will minimise the impact of the valley of death by providing jobs for the workers coming off the Air Warfare Destroyer project.

"Hundreds of jobs have already been lost with another 30 electrical contractors let go just last week as different phases of the Air Warfare Destroyer project are completed.

"Delivering the Offshore Patrol Vessels from anywhere else in Australia will compromise the success of the Future Frigates, and lead to cost premiums as we'd effectively be starting the shipyard up from scratch again. We learnt how costly this is through the Air Warfare Destroyer program.

"We can't have a conversation about shipbuilding in Australia without mentioning the key Future Submarines project.

“Australia’s Future Submarines must be Australian made.

“The Federal Government must rule out a hybrid or overseas build, and re-commit to building the full fleet of Future Submarines in Australia.

“It’s really very simple. The Federal Government can create thousands of jobs for Australian workers, or they can send decades of work off-shore and create jobs in France, Germany or Japan.

“A continuous naval shipbuilding program will deliver significant benefits across the nation, not just in South Australia.

“While it makes sense for the build to occur here given our infrastructure and workforce, the supply chain will draw from the defence industry across the nation including Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales.

“In addition to this, the naval fleet is based and maintained in New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory—meaning all of these states will get a considerable and fair share of work—a win for all Australians.”