

# South Australian Defence Industry Workforce and Skills Action Plan

2025 Update



Australian Government



Government  
of South Australia

# 2025 Executive Summary

The *2024 National Defence Strategy* and *Integrated Investment Program* sets out a coordinated, whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach to meet the strategic challenges Australia faces.

The development of a stronger defence industrial base with the domestic capability and capacity to support the ADF during a crisis or conflict is vital to this national effort.

The nuclear-powered submarine program is expected to create around 20,000 new direct jobs over the next three decades. The opportunities for broader Australian industry to participate in this whole-of-nation endeavour are articulated in *Australia's AUKUS Submarine Industry Strategy*.

South Australia has an important role in leading the advancement of critical defence projects to strengthen our industrial base and drive economic growth for our nation's future.

Osborne Naval Shipyard is an axis of Australia's maritime domain where continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment will deliver:

- SSN-AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine fleet construction.
- Hunter class frigate fleet construction.
- Collins class submarine Full-Cycle Docking and Life of Type Extension.
- Hobart class destroyer fleet combat management system upgrade & replacement fleet construction.

Central to this uplift is the workforce required to deliver it. Over 4,000 workers are needed for the design and build of the Submarine Construction Yard set to commence at the end of this decade. Across all naval shipbuilding and sustainment activities, over 11,000 workers will be needed by the time these ambitious projects peak in South Australia in 2040.

The South Australian Defence Industry Workforce and Skills (SADIWS) Action Plan is a \$58 million co-investment by the Australian and South Australian Governments to support the development of talent in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and other in-demand occupations from the primary school learner to the mid-career professional.

Investment in STEM education and engagement contributes to workforce capability across multiple sectors and participants in Action Plan initiatives may pursue careers in various sectors, including advanced manufacturing, energy, mining, and agriculture, regardless of whether they enter the defence industry.

Initiatives to recruit, reskill and retain workers include earn-while-you-learn programs and flexible transition pathways. These measures support adult learners, job seekers and mid-career professionals in entering the workforce and contributing immediately.

Since publication, 21 of the 22 initiatives outlined in the Action Plan have been implemented, with a final initiative being delivered in agreed timeframes. Key milestones achieved this year have direct relevance to South Australia, supporting career pathways from school into education and training facilities, including:

- Groundworks for the Skills and Training Academy Campus site at Osborne, a \$480 million project funded by the Australian Government, to deliver the high-tech education and training needed for SSN-AUKUS and Continuous Naval Shipbuilding.
- First trainees and apprentices commenced the Defence Industry Pathways Program and Shipbuilding Employment Pathways Program, two new and exciting defence industry career pathways.
- Launch of the Mechanical Engineering Degree Apprenticeship pilot.
- Opening of Port Augusta Technical College with completion of building works at The Heights and Tonsley Technical Colleges.
- Successful delivery of the inaugural South Australian Defence and Space Industry Careers Showcase, one element of the broader Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan.
- Rollout of the national Schools Pathways Program, valued at \$11 million for financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26 and continuation of the program in Western Australia and South Australia to the value of \$5.1 million over 2023-24 to 2025-26.

Opportunities are embedded across these initiatives to support the participation of more women, First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and people from lower social-economic backgrounds.

By continuing engagement with our AUKUS trilateral partners and collaborating in parallel with industry, unions, academia, and education and training providers, we are fostering STEM talent at home to meet the workforce challenge of our sovereign naval shipbuilding and sustainment enterprise.

This update provides a closer look at the range of participants finding their place in the defence industry workforce, with skilled migration programs and policy settings also complementing South Australia's broader workforce needs, and supporting Australia's defence industry.

**We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We recognise their continuing connection to traditional lands and waters and would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.**

**We would also like to pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.**



# Action Plan Progress and Impact

Since the launch of the SA Defence Industry Workforce and Skills Report in 2023, momentum is building as we dedicate effort and investment to grow the pipeline of new workers into this exciting industry, lift the skill levels of existing workers, and transfer critical knowledge and experience across AUKUS nations.

In just two years, we've seen a significant shift in perceptions with young people and mature workers interested in pursuing a defence industry career. As employer confidence in the projects strengthens, applications for defence workforce programs and jobs are becoming more competitive. School student engagement and vocational enrolments have increased and our programs have driven additional apprenticeships aligned to defence industry careers.

Publicly subsidised vocational education pathways in defence and manufacturing have experienced an uplift in enrolments of around 27 per cent from 2022 to 2024 with over 8,500 enrolments in 2024. In the first six months of 2025, there were more than 8,000 enrolments, an increase of greater than eight per cent when compared to the same period a year earlier.

More entry level workers are directly commencing their defence industry careers in trade apprenticeships spanning engineering fabrication, mechanical and electrotechnology (electrician) through industry early careers programs and the Shipbuilding Employment Pathway.

We've also seen more degree apprentices start in South Australian industry, undertaking software engineering and mechanical engineering qualifications, and Australian workers will soon return from their overseas placements in Pearl Harbour with crucial skills and experience from working with nuclear-powered submarines.

The Action Plan initiatives reflect part of the significant investment by the Australian and South Australian Governments to strengthen workforce supply and capability uplift across defence industry projects in South Australia.

The Action Plan contributes to the national defence industry workforce pipeline, operating alongside industry-led programs and initiatives under the *Defence Industry Development Strategy* and the *Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Plan*.

This document includes profiles of early Action Plan participants, including trainees, apprentices, degree apprentices, mid-career workers, students, educators and employers who have entered roles within South Australia's defence industry.





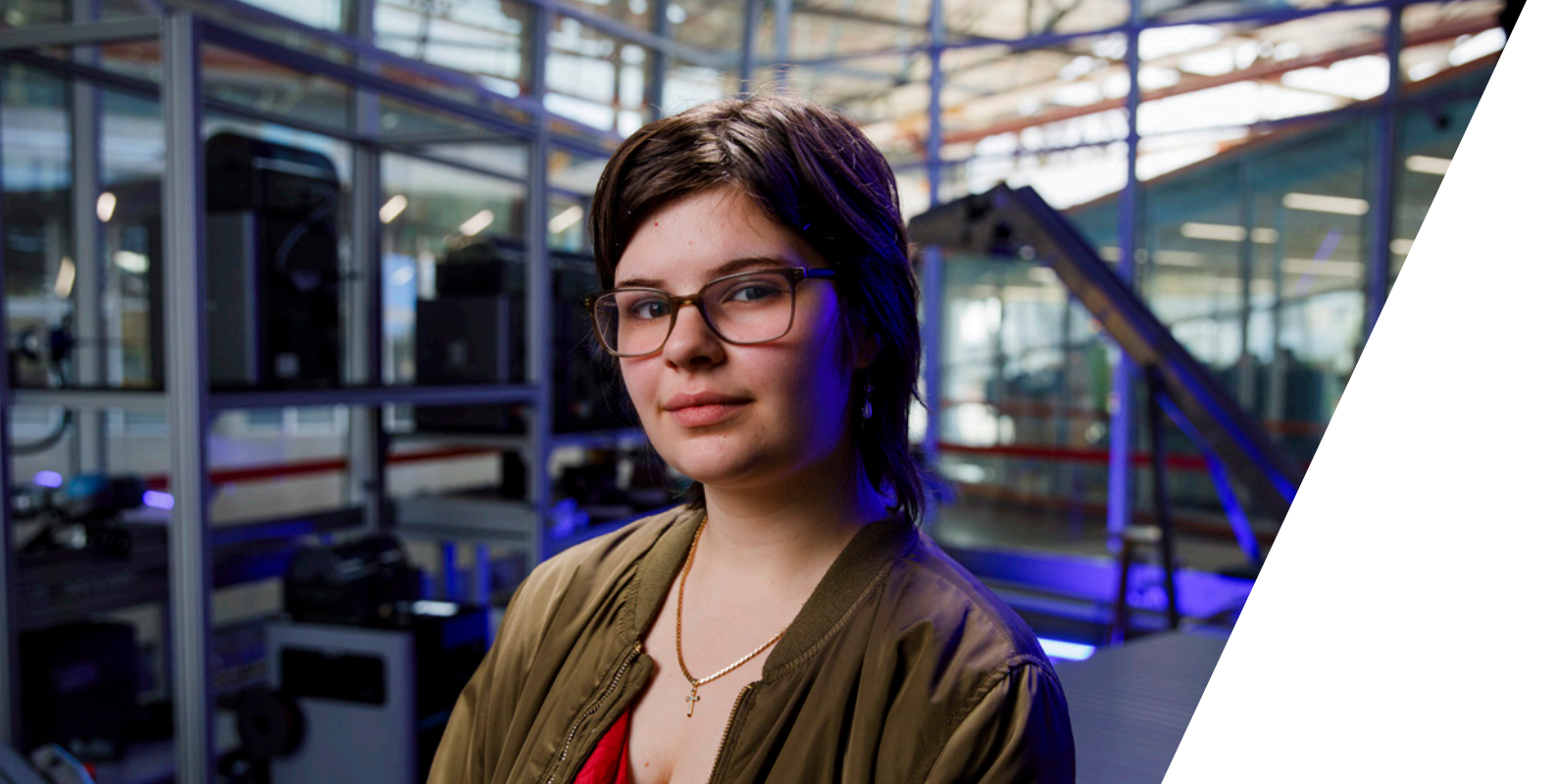
# Degree Apprenticeships

Defence industry workforce demand requires innovative career pathways with tangible, enduring outcomes.

South Australia has continued to pioneer an innovative approach to tertiary education with Flinders University launching a new Mechanical Engineering (Honours) degree apprenticeship pilot, co-designed with Australia's Sovereign Submarine Partner, ASC Pty Ltd.

Supported by the Australian and South Australian Governments, and in partnership with defence primes and small to medium enterprises (SMEs), the degree apprenticeship program integrates university study with paid on-the-job experience.

Early results show the program is helping degree apprentices to achieve strong academic results, and industry mentors note this style of contextualised learning contributes to high workplace productivity.



## Initiative in action: **Combining university study with real work experience**

Emilia is a first-year mechanical engineering student at Flinders University, currently placed at ASC as an apprentice mechanical engineer.

She says the prospect of real workplace experience is what attracted her to the degree apprenticeship in the first place, and the program has certainly delivered.

"This apprenticeship gives you so much exposure to real practices," Emilia said.

"I get to go down to the workshop, see what I'm actually working on, and then work on it. I wasn't expecting it to be so hands-on."

"Knowing that you're contributing to something so much bigger on a national level, it really does give you a deeper sense of purpose."

*"The initial feedback that we're getting from our apprentices is their deep connection to what we do for defence. The purpose behind it is really embedded in the program."*

**Paul, Workforce Training Partnerships Manager, ASC.**

*"Degree apprenticeships are transforming how we address workforce skills shortages in high-demand sectors such as engineering. Flinders University is proud to lead South Australia's first mechanical engineering degree apprenticeship, in collaboration with defence industry, SA and Federal governments, blending academic excellence with hands-on industry experience to build a highly skilled defence industry workforce."*

**Professor Giselle Rampersad, Dean, Science and Engineering, Flinders University.**



## Initiative in Action: Gaining practical experience with invaluable industry connections

The Defence Industry Connection Program (DICP), facilitated by Australian Industry Group, encourages university students (through scholarships and other supports) to complete their required work placements with a local defence industry business.

Intern, Gabrielle Garie is a Flinders University student completing a Bachelor of Computer Science in Artificial Intelligence.

She encountered the DICP through a university careers fair and given her existing interest in the defence industry, decided to give it a go.

"I like doing things with a purpose," Gabrielle said. "Not necessarily just to make money or meet company goals, but something that has actual impact."

"As a student in today's climate, there's pressure to get a secure job. Defence is not the kind of field that's going to be redundant anytime soon."

Six weeks into the experience, Gabrielle has enthusiastically embraced the steep and fast-paced learning curve.

"I've genuinely learned so much since I started. It's crazy - I just feel like a different person."



# Skills and Training Academy


Groundwork for the Skills and Training Academy (STA) Campus at Osborne, South Australia marks a new era in high-tech education and training for submarine and shipbuilding-related skills.

Due to be operational in early 2028, the STA Campus will simulate the submarine construction yard and provide hands-on skills and learning in workshops, classrooms and a central submarine mock-up area. Its tailored training programs (maritime and platform-specific) developed in partnership with industry, universities and TAFEs, will support a seamless pipeline from training to employment in the naval shipbuilding sector.

The STA Campus will deliver the bespoke skills needed for the SSN-AUKUS build in South Australia and enhance the skills of the existing workforce to support continuous naval shipbuilding.







# Shipbuilding and Submarine Workforce Pilot Programs

## Defence Industry Pathways Program

The Defence Industry Pathways Program (DIPP) is a 12-month paid traineeship (Certificate III) preparing new workers for critical defence industry roles such as logistics, engineering, drafting, design, safety, and cyber security.

Of Western Australian origins, the program is now supported in South Australia, with the Australian Submarine Agency and Department of Defence promoting career pathways in naval shipbuilding and sustainment, and opportunities for introductory training relevant to the nuclear-powered submarine program.

In collaboration with delivery partners PEER and TAFE SA, intakes for the 150 traineeships are filling rapidly with industry host partners providing resounding feedback as the first cohort approaches training completion in December 2025.

*“These programs are more than just training; they’re launching pads for meaningful careers in Australia’s growing defence sector. It’s inspiring to see the next generation stepping up to build a future of capability, innovation, and pride.”*

**Justin Struik, Managing Director, AEROBOND.**

*“BAE Systems Australia is incredibly proud to work alongside PEER amongst other Defence industry partners to recruit, select and support the DIPP students with training, work placement, networking opportunities, seeking out best practice and hopefully being a key step in their brilliant career ahead within the Defence Industry.”*

**Brian Kennedy, BAE Systems.**



# PEER



## Initiative in action: **Traineeships attracting new talent to SA's defence industry**

After 18 years working at a supermarket, 33-year-old Alanna Boyd was eager for change.

"I felt my journey there was over," Alanna said. "I wasn't growing anymore, and I wanted to explore other options before I felt it was too late."

An online search led her to South Australia's Defence Industry Pathways Program (DIPP), completely reshaping her view of defence careers and revealing opportunities she never imagined.

"When I did more research, I realised the defence industry is huge – there's recruitment, logistics, cybersecurity, and so much more" she said.

One visit to the Osborne shipyard clarified her personal career interests: "This traineeship helps you quickly find what suits you best."

Alanna soon found her niche in human resources at Babcock Australasia, drawing on her previous retail experience.

"I've been lucky to start in recruitment. I've brought my hiring and training skills from Coles and discovered I really enjoy that aspect of defence work."

"Even my partner is now considering applying. When I describe what I do, it opens people's eyes to opportunities they didn't even know existed."

*"South Australia is poised to play a pivotal role in safeguarding Australia's national interests, and initiatives such as the SEP and DIPP programs are a vital step toward building our future workforce. Our active involvement in both programs reflects our dedication to fostering a capable and emerging defence workforce and our aspiration to be the employer of choice in the defence industry."*

**Andrew Cridland, CEO, Babcock Australasia.**



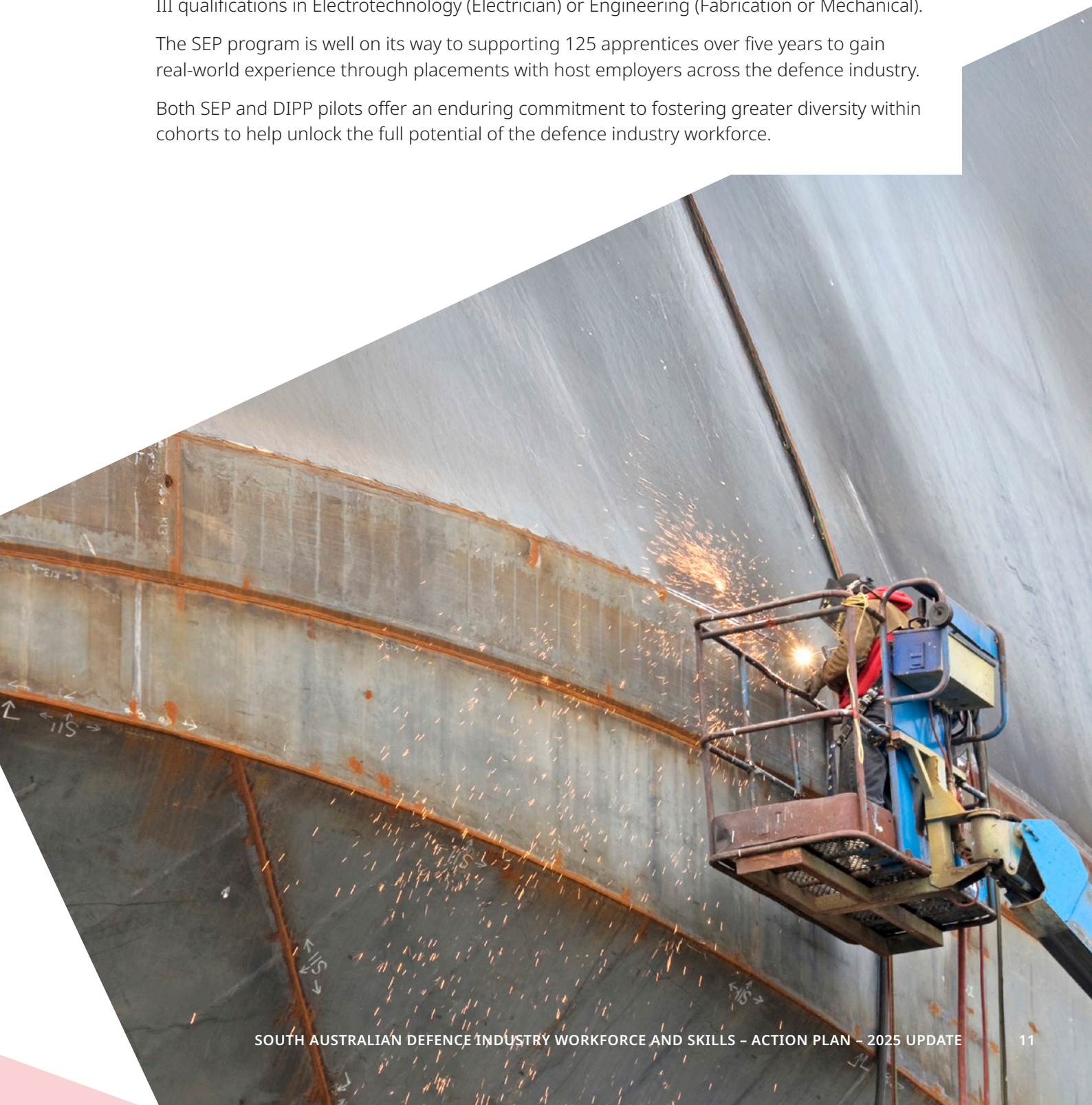
# Partnerships with Industry

## The Shipbuilding Employment Pathways

Equipping apprentices for a career in South Australia's growing defence industry sector, the Shipbuilding Employment Pathways (SEP) is a fully paid apprenticeship offering Certificate III qualifications in Electrotechnology (Electrician) or Engineering (Fabrication or Mechanical).

The SEP program is well on its way to supporting 125 apprentices over five years to gain real-world experience through placements with host employers across the defence industry.

Both SEP and DIPP pilots offer an enduring commitment to fostering greater diversity within cohorts to help unlock the full potential of the defence industry workforce.





## Initiative in action: Teaching Shipbuilding Employment Pathways

Trevor Smart spent over thirty years of his career with Santos. Working as an operator/maintainer across the Simpson Desert and Cooper Basin, he says he was a fly-in-fly-out worker 'before FIFO was a thing'.

After taking on some training coordinator roles in the oil and gas industry, Trevor made the transition into TAFE SA, including as an Engineering Lecturer for the government-funded Shipbuilding Employment Pathways (SEP) program.

Here, Trevor's industry experience has proven critical.

"Being in an industry like oil and gas, discipline and procedures and processes are now a critical element. This is also important to the defence industry."

Trevor says that, to date, the SEP program has attracted a real cross-section of people.

"It's just amazing the diversity of people we see come through," he said.

"Large employers for the shipbuilding projects appear to be very conscious of ensuring they get a diverse group in place."

"Some of them haven't got much experience in industry. They're at that front end of their learning path. It's critical to teach work ethic, respect, procedural discipline."

"Our task is to get them into the trade and help mould them into good tradespeople."

Trevor keeps students engaged by providing real-world context to the classroom learning.

"They come in to do maths, and look at what we call computations, and they're going – 'well, I did this at school'," he said.

"But then you start showing them how maths and radius and area and all those calculations come into play."

"They want to become tradespeople. They're hands-on people. Our job is to apply the context and make sure we engage them and give them a reason why they should be interested in this."



# Growing Capability – Retention & Upskilling

In addition to entry-level programs offered, targeted investment for mid-career workers is opening doors to long-term defence industry workforce careers.

Critical skills to deliver the nuclear-powered submarine program are facilitated through International Industrial Placement Programs, with defence industry employment actively promoted to transitioning Australian Defence Force personnel with relevant skill sets.

## Early Careers Program

Launched by ASC in 2023, the Early Careers Program is building the supply of ‘work ready’ graduates and experienced qualified trades with the critical shipbuilding skills needed to build and maintain Australia’s future submarine fleet. The program has seen increased intakes into apprenticeships across key trades, including fabrication, electrical, mechanical, pipe fitting and pipe welding, expanding to include both engineering and corporate roles.

Now in their third year, the first cohort of apprentices are on track to complete their training by the end of 2026, and 31 graduates have completed their training and started engineering roles within ASC.

## International Industrial Placements

A key upskilling program to prepare the existing workforce to deliver Australia’s conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine capability, the International Industrial Placements Program situates Australian defence industry workers in UK and US shipyards and facilities, with over 180 participants placed over the past two years. Participants develop the critical skills, experience and knowledge to build and sustain conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines and establish sovereign training capabilities.

The Australian Submarine Agency is working alongside Australia’s Sovereign Submarine Partners for build and sustainment to deliver key placements, providing a conduit for AUKUS international partners to support the experience and knowledge uplift required for Australian workers.

## ADF to Industry Transition Program

Through the Joint Transition Authority, Defence provides a Career Transition Coaching Program that assists transitioning ADF members to identify career options and opportunities.

In 2025, South Australia's Department for State Development, Defence SA and Veterans SA participated as stallholders in two Adelaide *ADF Member and Family Transition Seminars*. The Seminars help ADF members and their families by providing them with information about the program and potential job opportunities in South Australia's defence industry.

Additionally, the TAFE SA Skills Transition Education Program (STEP) provides a customised service for transitioning ADF members and their families, assisting with career guidance, enrolment, retraining or upskilling and study support to help them in the transition to the civilian world and to secure work.

## Defence Industry Leadership Program

The Defence Teaming Centre's (DTC) Defence Industry Leadership Program (DILP) has played a pivotal role in nurturing the growth of defence industry leaders since its establishment in 2010. In 2025, women and veterans made up half of the cohort's participants, demonstrating DTC's commitment to strengthening the talent pool by creating diverse teams.







## Initiative in action: Building the capability of tomorrow's defence industry leaders

A nine-month program, DILP is designed in collaboration with defence industry partners to develop the leadership capabilities of emerging leaders and mid-career defence industry workers.

2025 participant Daniel Bryan, from Lockheed Martin Australia, signed up having heard of colleagues' "fantastic" experience with the program.

"It's a service to myself, so I can be of better service to that next generation of employees inside our company" he said.

Increasing women's participation in the defence industry is also a priority of the DILP, as is supporting career opportunities for former Australian Defence Force personnel.

Shannon Carbone says that when she was recently promoted to a leadership position with Nova Systems, the DILP was the first thing that came to mind "to further my leadership skills and experience."

*"The Defence Industry Leadership Program has stood the test of time remaining relevant for over 15 years with close to 400 Alumni, many of whom have gone on to become the new captains of industry. I am as proud today as I was when we first started! It is well recognised as a key pillar, continuing to provide leadership succession in South Australia as The Defence State."*

**Kerryn Smith, General Manager Capability Development, DTC.**

# Sparking STEM confidence in students and educators

Critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, and digital literacy skills are essential for students to tackle the complex challenges of our nation's future. Given the global demand for these skills across multiple sectors, the Action Plan initiatives position the defence industry workforce as a career of choice, and support the STEM education of our primary, secondary and VET students, and their educators.

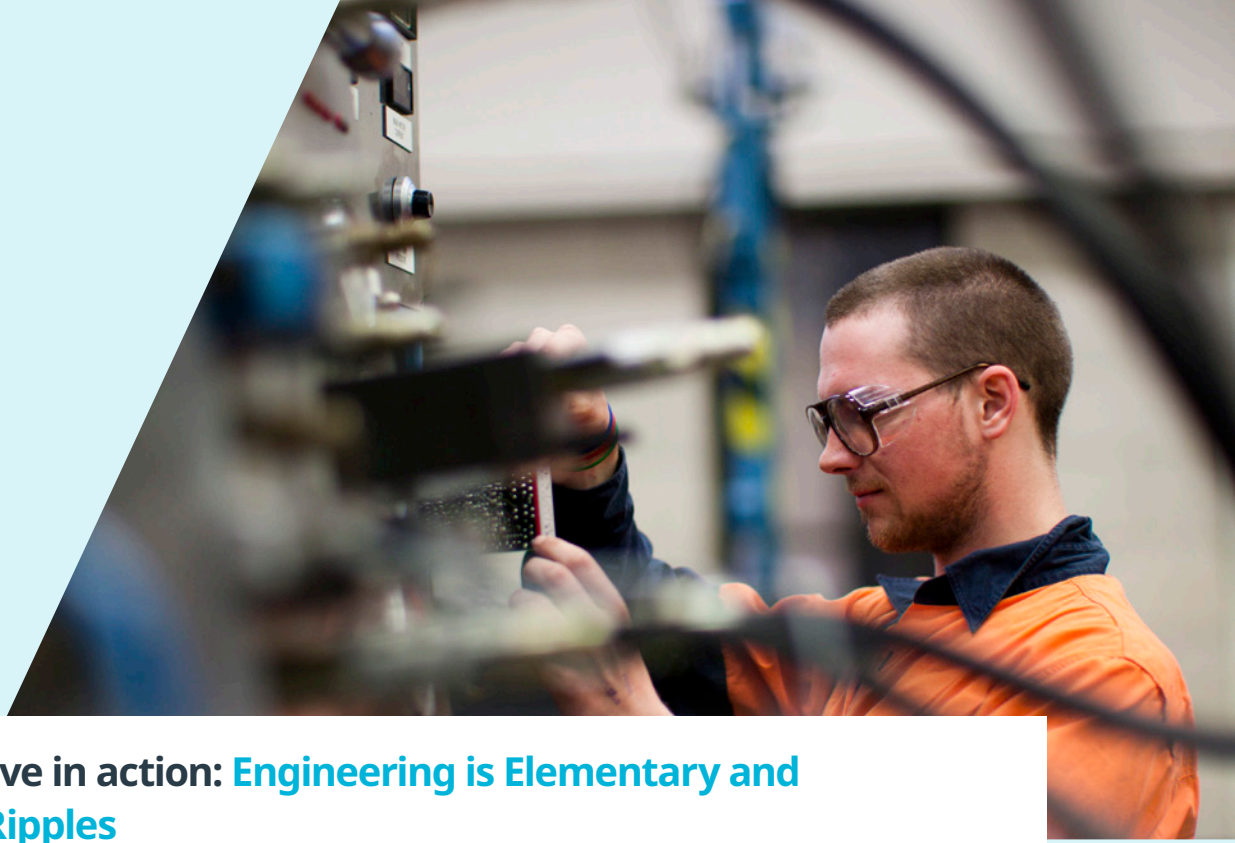
## Initiative in action: **Regional Students Explore STEM and Defence Industry Pathways**

In 2025, Ceduna Area School hosted two major initiatives under the Schools Pathways Program designed to inspire students across regional South Australia and highlight pathways for Aboriginal students into the defence industry and broader STEM careers. The first initiative, the STEM and Defence Industry Immersion Day, brought together more than 120 students from Years 8 to 12. Industry partners delivered hands-on workshops, interactive demonstrations and career-focused discussions. Students gained first-hand insights into the skills, study options and pathways available in STEM and the defence industry.

This initiative purposely addressed areas of interest for First Nations peoples. Students explored how a culturally responsive approach can support the integration of identity and cultural connection with modern career exploration. The school also hosted the Cyber Escape Experience, a mobile escape room designed to simulate real-world cybersecurity scenarios. Teams of Years 8 to 11 students worked together to solve cyber-themed puzzles and complete interactive missions, building digital literacy, teamwork and critical thinking skills.

Both initiatives highlighted the growing importance of STEM and cyber skills while promoting diverse education and training pathways.





## Initiative in action: **Engineering is Elementary and Little Ripples**

Designed as an immersive professional development program, Questacon is delivering Engineering is Elementary (EIE) nationwide to equip primary school educators with skills and resources to teach STEM subjects. To date in South Australia, 184 educators from across 54 schools have participated in this program.

Questacon has also expanded regional engagement via a series of STEM Futures Workshops held in both Port Augusta and Adelaide. Over 170 participants across 30 schools and organisations have attended, including classroom teachers, STEM educational leaders and providers, and local industry representatives. This group will continue to be connected through a community of practice led by the South Australia Regional Leader.

To further strengthen STEM awareness for early learners, the Little Ripples program, led by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, provides a suite of online age-appropriate resources to support parents and educators of primary school children in activating conversations that spark curiosity about STEM career opportunities. The Little Ripples “Layla & Liam” e-books are hosted on the Australian Government’s YourCareer website.

Layla & Liam  
**How are things made?**



 Little Ripples





## Initiative in action: **Equitable access to STEM opportunities**

The South Australian Government's Expand STEM Scholarship Program supports public high school students from groups historically under-represented in STEM to pursue these subjects and learn about the range of STEM careers available.

The scholarship can cover costs including tutors, laptops, excursions or anything else that helps a student achieve in their chosen STEM subjects and career pathways.

Tyson is an Aboriginal learner from the Woiwurrung people studying Year 11 at Salisbury High School.

"The STEM Scholarship provides me with the essential resources needed to achieve my academic goals in mathematics and science" Tyson said.

"It has enabled me to purchase a reliable laptop so I can access online learning platforms, use advanced STEM-related software, and complete assignments without the constant fear of technical disruptions."

"Additionally, the scholarship has helped me access tutoring support. As I am planning on taking on more advanced maths and science subjects, the academic support available at home is limited. With tutoring, I can strengthen my understanding of these subjects, enabling me to perform better in exams and assignments."

Tyson's teacher, Rebecca Ludwig says Tyson is also deeply motivated by personal goals that go beyond academics.

"He aspires to be the first in his family to attend university, a powerful driving force that underscores his determination to succeed."

The STEM Scholarship Program is delivered by the SA Department for Education in partnership with industry sponsors. Tyson's sponsorship is supported by telecommunications company ElectraNet.



## **Initiative in action: Ridhaan propels his career with Certificate II in Aeroskills**

Strengthening South Australia's preparedness to meet aerospace capability needs, the Certificate II in Aeroskills is building the supply of avionics and aircraft technical trades. With limited educational pathways to entry-level roles, the Certificate II in Aeroskills is a dedicated VET pathway for aircraft maintenance that is available to all secondary students, and now jobseekers, providing an opportunity to transition to Certificate IV in Aeroskills and other relevant trade courses in the aerospace sector.

Year 11 student, Ridhaan is on the path to achieving his dream of serving in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and is studying the one-year Certificate II in Aeroskills. This course helps high school students forge a career path in the defence, civil aviation and aeroskills industries while they are still at school.

"It's amazing, I love it," says the Adelaide High School student. "It's really engaging and hands on—and I just love anything that's practical."

Once a week, Ridhaan trains in a dedicated Flight One School of Engineering hangar at Adelaide Airport. He works on real aircraft, developing technical skills, aviation safety knowledge and teamwork.

"I have prepared the engine cowl and removed the wheels," explains Ridhaan, who is mixing the hands-on learning and theory with studying English, specialist maths and physics. "Now, I am starting to refuel and sample and defuel the plane."

The partnership between the Heights Technical College and aerospace leader, Boeing Defence Australia further supports the employment pathway into South Australia's growing aerospace sector.

## **Initiative in action: Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan**

The Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan 2024–2028 was developed in consultation with key defence sector stakeholders and informed by market research with target cohorts. The narrative is used by government, industry and education institutions to consistently communicate career opportunities within the defence industry.

The 2025 inaugural South Australian Defence and Space Careers Showcase was an outstanding success. Featuring 23 exhibitors including defence primes, SMEs and education/pathway providers, it drove strong engagement with the defence and space sector, attracting over 17,730 visitors and 8,899 subscribers to the refreshed content at [findyourplacesa.com](https://findyourplacesa.com).

# What's next?

The Action Plan is a pivotal coordination point supporting Australia's sovereign capability uplift and its direct interventions demonstrate the joint response required to broaden South Australia's defence industry workforce pipeline.

Building on the Action Plan's achievements, new targeted responses and investments in 2026 are further fuelled by the Australian and South Australian Governments innovative collaboration across industry, academia, unions, educators, and skills and training providers for the future. This includes identifying critical roles, niche skills requirements and continuing to broaden the overall trades and engineering workforce pipeline.

## In 2026 and beyond:

- Launch of the **Electrical & Electronic Engineering Degree Apprenticeship** at Flinders University with industry partner ASC. Building on existing pilots in Mechanical Engineering and Software Engineering, the Degree Apprenticeship program has fostered engagement from adjacent sectors in clean energy, construction and mining who recognise its potential to build a pipeline of industry-ready workers in their respective fields.
- Opening of the Heights, Limestone Coast and Tonsley **Technical Colleges** offering a suite of industry training programs, including:
  - advanced manufacturing and engineering, aeroskills and multi-trades
  - major employer partners include BAE Systems Australia, ASC and BoeingAll five technical colleges will be operational in 2026, providing hands-on industry training for students, and accelerated pathways to employment or higher education.
- Delivery of the **STEM Evaluation Framework**. Led by Defence Science and Technology Group and co-designed with Defence STEM program administrators and the Australian Centre for Evaluation, the framework is a strategic resource designed to help the Defence STEM ecosystem with planning, adaptation and up-scaling of successful government-funded STEM programs for broader reach and impact.
- The South Australian Government's new **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rolls-Royce Submarines** will inspire the next generation of Australia's nuclear engineers. This MoU will further develop the co-design and implementation of defence industry workforce initiatives alongside the State's existing MoUs with BAE, ASC and HII Nuclear Australia.
- The \$28 million **National Security TAFE Centre of Excellence** to be established at TAFE SA's Regency Campus will boost national security and upskill technicians so they are job-ready for AUKUS. This will include partnering with UK and US education institutes to transfer advanced technology training and develop new qualifications relevant to Australia's defence industry.



- Scoping of **education and training programs for early activation** to continue growing and upskilling the submarine and shipbuilding workforce. Tailored for industry's workforce needs, these include Welding Aptitude testing, Welding Bridging training and Non-Destructive Testing.
- In 2026, the South Australian **Defence and Space Careers Showcase** will be held alongside the Adelaide Careers and Employment Expo, this time over three days from 7–9 May. It will target students, teachers, career counsellors, job seekers, and career changers seeking information about opportunities in the defence and space sectors.
- Operated by Adelaide University, the **Australian Defence Technologies Academy** (ADTA) is enabled through collaboration with its partners and supported by \$60 million in funding from the Australian and South Australian governments via the Adelaide City Deal. The ADTA will ignite a new era of innovation as a nation-first launchpad, pioneering research while accelerating workforce and capability development across defence, space and cyber technologies to keep Australia and its allies safe. The Academy is scheduled to commence in 2026 ahead of its official establishment at a new purpose-built facility at Lot Fourteen from late 2028.



# South Australian Defence Industry Workforce and Skills

## Primary

## Secondary

## VET

### Schools Pathways Program

Informs young Australians about the varied pathways and career opportunities within defence industry and encourages engagement in STEM. Facilitates an understanding of defence industry, provides access to defence industry career experiences, mentoring and networking opportunities, and encourages student participation in STEM activities and/or subjects.

- Up to 10,000 students and 1,000 teachers.
- \$2.6 million from 2023–24 to 2025–26.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Skills and Training Academy

*The Skills and Training Academy (STA)* is a \$480m investment in South Australia to uplift the shipbuilding and nuclear-powered submarine workforce. The STA campus in South Australia will provide optimised training methods through new and existing facilities, systems and training materials.

### Engineering is Elementary Program – leverage further

Educating teachers in schools through immersive STEM professional development via Questacon. The program will be leveraged further to engage additional South Australian schools.

- 2024–27.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Expand STEM scholarships for secondary students

STEM scholarships for more high school students in low-socioeconomic status groups to continue STEM subjects into their final years of high school (SACE Stage 1 and 2).

- Up to 50 scholarships per year from 2024.
- \$1.9 million.
- SA Government funded.

### South Australia's technical colleges

New Technical Colleges at Findon, Tonsley, the Heights, Limestone Coast, and Port Augusta delivering advanced manufacturing, engineering and multi-trades programs with industry partners.

- Approx. 200 students at each college each year.
- 150 defence aligned students each year.
- \$208 million, SA Government.

### Industry projects in schools – Beacon

Inspiring young people to pursue STEM – in partnership with BAE engaging school students (years 4–8) using the latest technologies.

- 80 schools by 2026, targeting 12,000 students.
- \$1.93 million from 2024–26.
- SA Government funded.

### Entry-level VET pathway for aircraft maintenance

New entry-level pathway via Certificate II Aeroskills for school students and job seekers – backed by key aerospace companies and the Department of Defence.

- 34 students completed the 2024 pilot. Aeroskills II is available to all secondary school students as part of the VET pathway.
- Aeroskills II for Jobseekers commences Q4 2025.
- \$450,000 per annum.
- SA Government funded.

### School-aged career education resources (Little Ripples)

Resources for educators about the range of careers in advanced manufacturing and submarine building.

- 2024 onwards.
- Up to \$250,000.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Expand Flexible Industry Programs

Expand Flexible Industry Programs in SA's secondary schools to enhance the accessibility of relevant industry-endorsed pathways to employment.

- 20 new schools @ 15–30 students per school per annum from 2024–25.
- \$1.5 million for two years.
- SA Government funded.

### Defence Industry Pathways Program

New traineeship program delivering Certificate III in Defence Industry Pathways to fill critical roles such as logistics, engineering, drafting, design, safety, cyber security.

- 150 places over three years from 2025.
- Commonwealth to fund \$6 million and SA Government to fund \$6 million.

### Shipbuilding Employment Pathways Program

Apprentices gain real-world experience through placements with host employers across defence industry, enabling them to build their skills while they work towards the completion in Certificate III:

- \* Engineering - Fabrication
- \* Engineering - Mechanical
- \* Electrotechnology - Electrician
- 125 apprentices to complete their qualifications over the next 5 years from 2025.
- Commonwealth funded.

## Supporting Measures

### Comprehensive Defence Industry Workforce Planning and Intelligence Service

Ongoing information intelligence to inform workforce risks and intervention focus areas in South Australia and across Australia.

- Commonwealth funded up to \$8 million.

### STEM Evaluations Framework

Establish a consistent evaluation framework for STEM programs to better evaluate their impact.

- Co-designed with Defence STEM leaders and the Australian Centre for Evaluation (Treasury).
- Commonwealth funded.



## Undergraduate

## Entry

## Mid

- Pilot programs from 2023, including skills for nuclear environments; cross-skilling and apprenticeship-based learning from 2024; and facilities from 2027–28.
- Facilities designed to support up to 800–1,000 learners of all skill levels, per year from 2027–28.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Commonwealth Supported Places

Additional university places for SA universities to deliver more graduates from STEM disciplines.

- 1,030 places.
- Jan 2024 through to 2028.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Degree Apprenticeship Pilots

On-the-job, paid degree apprenticeships in partnership with universities, defence industry primes and supply chain businesses.

- Up to 375 new apprenticeships over four years.
- \$2.5 million from 2024–28.
- Joint Commonwealth and SA Government funded.

### Defence Industry Connection Program

Scholarships for eligible undergraduates and connecting students to defence industry internships, networks, and mentors.

- 300 places.
- \$3.9 million from 2024–28.
- SA Government funded.

### Defence Force Recruiting – applicants to Industry Transition Program

Supporting Defence Force Recruiting candidates with an interest in Australian Defence Force service who do not meet the strict requirements to consider a career in defence industry.

- From Q1 2024.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Australian Defence Force to Industry Transition Program

Active promotion of defence industry employment to transitioning Australian Defence Force personnel with relevant skill sets.

- Around 7,000 per annum transitioning from Australian Defence Force.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Early Careers Program

Apprentices, undergrads and grads to access advanced technologies and training in designing, building, and maintaining submarines

- Up to 70 Participants over a four year period through to end of 2026.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Defence Industry Leadership Program

Tailored for mid-career defence industry supply chain members, delivered by industry.

- Up to 50 per annum.
- Recommended in 2024 and will run until 2027.
- SA Government to fund \$0.84 million over five years and industry to invest \$1.75 million.

### International Placement Programs

Onboard, retain and upskill suitable workers with existing defence industry skills and experience through international placement programs. Developed under the broader AUKUS trilateral mobility program to grow necessary nuclear program experience for Australia's nuclear-powered submarine program.

- Up to 500 placements expected by 2027.
- Short-term international placements: focused placements over 3-12 months.
- Long-term international placements: 12 months.
- Commonwealth funded.

### Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan

Engagement with defence industry, federal and state government departments, and academia has informed the development of the Strategic Communications and Outreach Plan. Defence industry attraction narrative is used in market by stakeholders in their own content.

- SA Government funded – \$1.35 million.

### AGSVA industry engagement

The Customer Outreach Team provides focused whole of government and industry customer service and support, through direct engagement with defence industry, AGSVA website, and associated guidance, support awareness of clearance requirements and will continue to evolve as required.

- Commonwealth funded.



**Australian Government**



**Government  
of South Australia**

The 2025 Action Plan Update builds on the achievement of the 2023 SA Defence Industry Workforce and Skills Taskforce, who commended the proactivity and foresight of the employers that partnered with government on the implementation of the 2023 Report's initiatives – investing time and resources now to build the workforce of the future.

Engagement with industry, education and training providers, workers, unions, and communities was instrumental to the development of the 2023 Report, and continued partnerships will prove critical to its success.

To participate in any of the workforce development initiatives – for instance, as a student, employer, or delivery partner – contact us at:

Email: [defenceindustryworkforce@sa.gov.au](mailto:defenceindustryworkforce@sa.gov.au)

Website: [statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/defence-industry](https://statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/defence-industry)



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