

MEDIA RELEASE

Pacific 2012 to boost small Australian companies

Two specialist workshops in Sydney will help Small and Medium Enterprises, or SMEs, win new business in Australia's naval and resources markets.

The workshops, which are free to participating companies and registered Trade Visitors, will be held at the Pacific 2012 International Maritime Exposition at Darling Harbour from 31 January to 3 February.

They will provide insights and expert advice on how defence SMEs can position themselves to win work on some \$70 billion-worth of major naval projects commencing over the next decade as well as creating resilience through diversifying into Australia's vibrant resources sector – the oil, gas and mining markets. The workshops will be sponsored by the Defence Industry Innovation Centre (DIIC), part of the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education's Enterprise Connect program.

"Over the next two decades the Royal Australian Navy plans to acquire over 40 new ships and submarines along with new sensors, weapons and equipment worth around \$70 billion," according to Ian Honnery, CEO of Maritime Australia Ltd, the not-for-profit company which is organising Pacific 2012. The shopping list includes 12 Future Submarines, 8 Future Frigates and 20 Offshore Combatant Vessels.

"Some of these projects won't get under way for another 10 years or more, but it's vital that Australian defence SMEs start positioning themselves now to secure work on these programs," Mr Honnery said. "These projects will demand very high levels of technology, quality and management skill from the suppliers and sub-contractors. Our breakfast workshop on Friday 3 February will share some hard-won lessons and tricks of the trade which will help the SMEs prepare themselves for these emerging opportunities."

The second breakfast workshop, on Thursday 2 February, will help SMEs smooth out the peaks and troughs in demand between major defence projects by diversifying to pursue supply chain opportunities in the booming oil, gas and resources sectors.

"Many of the skills and capabilities that oil and gas and resources companies seek in their suppliers are exactly the same as those which are highly prized in the defence industry," said Mr Honnery. "Both sectors demand smart, high-technology companies working to very demanding quality and safety standards."

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“A number of Australian companies have successfully bridged that gap and we’re providing a platform for them to share their secrets,” he added. “Diversification can help defence SMEs grow their business and maintain and enhance vital skills.”

The workshops start at 7.30am and run for 90 minutes. They are supported by DIIC and will be facilitated by defence and technology consulting firm AADI Defence Pty Ltd. Speakers include former Navy Chief Vice Admiral David Shackleton, former deputy CEO of the Australian Submarine Corporation Mr Ross Milton, CEO of the Defence Materials Technology Centre Dr Mark Hodge, Mr Tony Quick of the Future Manufacturing Industry Innovation Council and Chris Williams, General Manager of diversified defence and resources engineering company HI Fraser Pty Ltd.

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