

INDUSTRY CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

The Defence Materials Technology Centre's (DMTC) Industry Capability Development Program aims to create a network of 'Defence-ready' companies with benchmarked, globally competitive capabilities.

The program aims to foster collaboration between local small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and also build a critical mass of local capability that can be presented to prime contractors for major Defence projects. This is ultimately about enhancing Defence capability but, significantly, is also about building industrial capacity in regions across Australia.

Building on previous capacity-building successes in areas such as CNC machining and additive manufacturing (3D printing), current efforts focus on enhancing the welding capabilities of companies wishing to enter into defence industry supply chains. The program includes benchmarking and skills and technology transfer opportunities.

Outcomes

Companies participating in DMTC's Industry Capability Development Program gain exposure to the latest techniques and equipment used in engineering and manufacturing, and insights into quality, safety and certification standards required within defence supply chains.

This kind of benchmarking and skill-building work is critical in building capacity and enhancing production techniques. It's a key part of the transition for the companies, and for the regional economy as a whole, to more advanced manufacturing.

Next steps

The welding and fabrication program, which began in Victoria's Latrobe Valley, has been extended into new programs in Mackay (Qld) and the Illawarra (NSW) – thanks to funding commitments from the respective State Governments. Planning is underway to run similar programs in Tasmania and South Australia in 2017.

DMTC is also planning future activities in other specific manufacturing techniques and technologies, for example to enhance Australian industrial capability in areas such as corrosion management and additive manufacturing.

Benchmarking and assessment of industry capabilities – in the initial project locations and potentially in other key regional centres around Australia – can be used to inform decisions on future research and technology transfer priorities, and form part of the development of a broader national 'map' of domestic industry capability for Defence.



Department
of Industry



CASE STUDY: LATROBE VALLEY

DMTC has been collaborating with the Latrobe City Council since 2015 to boost the capabilities of selected SMEs in the Latrobe Valley.

The DMTC team (comprising a program leader from DMTC and researchers from the University of Wollongong, Swinburne University of Technology and the University of Queensland) has been working with these SMEs on welding techniques and technologies, specifically to enhance capabilities in the welding of high-strength steels.

Methodology

The Latrobe project involves:

- an initial briefing/workshop to highlight opportunities and relevant information on working in the defence sector
- a review to identify existing welding capabilities of interested companies, benchmarked against the requirements of the defence industry sector and the identification of any gaps

- welding trials on representative test plates
- appropriate validation testing of the participant's welds, the sharing of results assessed against best practice results and the identification of areas for improvement
- a final report outlining potential best practice welding processes for defence supply chains and a proposed pathway to address current shortfalls and take advantage of defence opportunities.

Outcomes

The outcomes for companies participating in the Latrobe Valley project will be:

- education on the latest techniques and processes in welding high strength steels
- information on the international standards and processes required for the defence sector
- access to the latest automated welding techniques and equipment
- a recommended pathway to welding practice improvement
- a mechanism to network and collaborate to establish a critical mass of capability in the region.



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