

Speech by Mayor Logan K Howlett JP
South Metropolitan TAFE WA Defence Industry Uplift Forum
South Metropolitan TAFE, Munster Campus
30 April 2026

Kaya Wanju

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the South Metropolitan TAFE WA Defence Industry Uplift Forum on behalf of the City of Cockburn. I am joined by Charisse Santiago, Senior Economic Development Officer.

Along with Programmed, the City has proudly sponsored today's event, which is co-delivered by the Australian Industry Defence Network and South Metropolitan TAFE.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk Nyungar people of Beeliar Boodja, the Traditional Custodians of this land and I pay my respects to their Elders past and present and I extend that respect to all First Nations people here today.

Western Australia, and particularly the Henderson Defence Precinct in the City of Cockburn, sits at the heart of Australia's continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment capability, at a time when we are on the precipice of one of the most significant economic opportunities in a generation.

AUKUS, the Federal Government's strategic shipbuilding commitment, the agreement with Austal, and the Mogami frigate acquisition represent a long-term, durable pipeline of defence investment.

This is not a short-term trend.

These programs will unfold over decades, meaning the connections and capabilities built today will deliver returns for years to come.

We are not talking about a short-term contract here or there.

We are talking about a generational commitment; investment that will shape this region for decades.

The Australian Marine Complex isn't just in our backyard; it is our backyard.

And our role is to ensure local businesses; workers and our community are the ones who benefit from what's coming.

That's why events such as these are so vital.

Every small to medium size enterprise that enters the supply chain, every Cockburn resident who builds a career in the defence sector is a real time demonstration of what economic development looks like in practice.

We are proud to work with government, industry, and training providers to help local businesses access and compete for this work.

The AMC is home to major prime contractors and a growing ecosystem of SMEs uniquely positioned to benefit from the national defence investment pipeline.

Workforce is the critical enabler and today's forum directly addresses this, through sessions on supply chain entry, skills development, and defence industry specific training.

South Metropolitan TAFE's Defence Industry Skills Centre of Excellence is a nationally significant asset, offering trades and skills training aligned directly to what the industry needs.

The contribution of organisations like Programmed – who are actively building a defence-ready workforce – and AIDN, who connect and support defence industry businesses across the network – is exactly the kind of industry collaboration that makes this ecosystem work.

Please make the most of today.

The connections made in rooms like these are how opportunities transform communities and ultimately, the lives of the people who call Cockburn and surrounds home.

Thank you and enjoy the forum.