

OPINION

Ben Morton: How WA is driving national economy and security

Ben Morton | The West Australian

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The Morrison Government is investing in WA shipbuilding capabilities. Credit: Simon Santi/The West Australian

- Western Australia is the backbone of our national economy. Our industries keep the nation thriving.
- We are the powerhouse of Australia's export earnings. When WA is going well, the rest of the nation is too. That's why we must continue to future-proof our workers and industries.
- Our mining industries in particular are brimming with top-notch skilled workers. Skills that can be transferred across to our emerging defence ecosystem to continue to secure the future of WA jobs.

It's an exciting time for shipbuilding in WA. This week's announcement takes the Morrison Government's commitment to the shipbuilding industry in WA to \$30 billion that will maintain and sustain projects and jobs through to 2040.

This includes our investment of \$2.7 billion into WA designed and built shipbuilding infrastructure. We plan to have over 50 vessels constructed or upgraded in our State. Currently, Australia only has one dry berth based in Sydney. It's already more than 75 years old and due for significant maintenance in a few years. Building a large dry dock in WA will create thousands of long-term jobs and help keep Australia and WA safe.

The Henderson Maritime Precinct is one of Australia's two principal shipbuilding hubs. The growth and opportunities for industry and jobs is enormous. It will create more than 2000 jobs for West Australians by 2030, with potential for further growth.

The Morrison Government has partnered with our own Australian sovereign shipbuilder to manage and implement the new Sovereign Shipbuilding Talent Pool to ensure we best utilise our existing workforce. We want to find a role for each and every local shipbuilding worker who has the skills that fit the bill. And we will support businesses to translate their knowledge from other similar industries and trades to service our defence industry.

It will be a whole-of-nation effort through our technology, engineering, research, industry and defence forces to ensure we are safer and more secure than ever before.

West Australians will have job security and local businesses will be able to invest with confidence knowing shipbuilding will continue at a steady pace for decades to come. Demand for highly skilled workers in many diverse occupations will provide secure employment for generations of Australian workers into the future.

Collins class submarine intermediate and mid-cycle dockings will continue to be performed at Henderson until the mid-2040s supporting approximately 500 West Australian jobs.

The Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessel build has already commenced and will continue at Henderson at a cost of approximately \$3.9 billion, with a projection to translate to 265 jobs for West Australians. These investments build on grants available to our local WA companies who are committed to our national interests and security.

I've been fortunate enough to meet with VEEM Ltd in Canning Vale, based in my electorate. The Morrison Government backed marine manufacturing business VEEM with over \$800,000 in Federal funding so it could continue to grow in its traditional propeller business and also join the Hunter Class frigate supply chain. This will provide them a market advantage to increase their domestic and global investments in defence capabilities – boosting business, jobs and security prospects.

- [VEEM gets crack at supplying RAN's new frigates](#)

I'm proud that local companies like VEEM are pioneering in this field. With the support of the grant, VEEM will be able to use its intellectual property to design unique innovations that comply with defence specifications.

Manufacturing and technology are the way of the future and the jobs of the future.

AUKUS will give Australia access to cutting-edge technology and intellectual property – cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities. These are the jobs of the future and will ensure we are prepared for the challenges of the future.

We must continue to put West Australians first by boosting our industries, creating and securing long-term jobs and keeping our nation safe.

Ben Morton is Federal Liberal MP for Tangney, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Minister for the Public Service and Special Minister of State