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LOCAL SUBMARINE BUILD, AND NEW SHIPBUILDING ORDERS THE ONLY WAY TO MAINTAIN OUR NATIONAL SECURITY.

Thursday 25 February, 2016.

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) welcomes the Federal Government's decision to implement its pre-election promise to build 12 submarines to secure Australia's future defence but remains deeply concerned about Malcolm Turnbull's failure to announce a local build for the \$50 billion submarine project.

"This White Paper is a political document designed to shore up the Coalition's poor electoral prospects in South Australia," said AMWU Assistant National Secretary Glenn Thompson.

"If Prime Minister Turnbull is serious about meeting Australia's defence needs in coming decades he should take the option of an overseas build or a hybrid build for the submarine program off the table,' Mr Thompson said.

"It is clear from evidence given to the Senate Inquiry into Naval Shipbuilding that the only logical way to operate a submarine fleet is to build, maintain and sustain the subs here in Australia."

"We can't afford to abandon the high level expertise developed at ASC in Adelaide through the building and maintenance of the Collins Class submarines," he said.

Mr Thompson said all three prospective companies undergoing the government's "competitive evaluation process" had indicated they were prepared to build the future submarines locally.

"But if this Government abandons shipbuilding like it dumped the auto industry, Australian shipbuilders and the companies they work for, will be the losers."

"What we need is a Government that understands the importance of shipbuilding and it's potential to further enhance and expand our manufacturing skills base."

"It is very clear that without a specialist submarine support industry here in Australia, our Navy would be forced to rely on foreign-based technical experts to solve maintenance and operational issues that affect all submarines."

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“Australia has made a considerable investment in submarine building and maintenance capability which must not be lost if we are to protect our strategic and national security interests.”

“It’s clear that Australia’s 12 submarines would cost about the same amount of money no matter where they were built, so far better to build them all here, enhance our knowledge and skill base and boost the Australian economy,” he said.

The Government has previously announced a continuous build program for future naval surface ship procurement but today’s White paper also fails to outline a way forward for the shipbuilding industry.

“Mr Turnbull now faces a critical decision to save the shipbuilding industry by quickly placing new orders for naval vessels or allowing it decline even further,” Mr Thompson said.

The AMWU has waged a relentless campaign over more than two years to save shipbuilding jobs and give our shipbuilders a future in the industry they love.

“Only quick action on the part of the Federal Government will save what’s left of the industry,” said AMWU Assistant National Secretary Glenn Thompson.

“The cost in jobs lost under this Government has been monumental with more than 1800 workers made redundant because the only customer, the Federal Government, did not understand the consequences of failing to bring forward new work,” he said.

“Unless the Government’s proposed continuous build starts soon, there may not be any shipbuilding industry left.”

Mr Thompson said Newcastle’s Forgacs shipyard was closing, the BAE shipyard at Williamstown in Victoria faced imminent closure and without fresh orders, more jobs would go at ASC in Adelaide.

“This Government has mismanaged the procurement of an icebreaker, sent two Navy supply-ship orders offshore, cancelled an extra Air Warfare Destroyer and has failed to bring new programs for off-shore patrol vessels and frigates into the build phase.”

“There is so much shipbuilding work in the planning stages and yet the Government has been unwilling or unable to convert these plans into firm and timely orders.”

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