

Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union



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UNIONS REJECT ABBOTT GOVERNMENT'S CLAIMS ON PRODUCTIVITY.

Defence Minister Kevin Andrews needs to recognise that productivity has improved at ASC and take the crucial decision to build Australia's future submarines in Adelaide.

The Senate Inquiry into the Future of Naval Shipbuilding will examine issues surrounding productivity on the current Air Warfare Destroyer project, with evidence from shipbuilders, industry experts and the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union.

"The Air Warfare Destroyer project is 'first of build' and 'first of class' and is running in line with world's best practice," said Glenn Thompson, AMWU assistant national secretary.

Mr Thompson said the Abbott Government had failed to justify its claims about the cost of building vessels in Australia; the capability gap; and problems with the skills and capacity of our ship builders.

"Previous evidence to the Senate Inquiry has demolished all these claims and now the Government is trying to suggest naval shipbuilding projects should go overseas because of productivity concerns," he said.

Mr Thompson said today's hearing would give shipbuilders the opportunity to reveal the truth about shipbuilding productivity and that unless a "continuous build" program was adopted Australia faced the impending loss of much of our naval shipbuilding capacity.

He said workers whose jobs depend on new shipbuilding contracts were suspicious about Minister Andrew's condition that Australian industry needs to improve productivity BEFORE a continuous build program can be implemented.

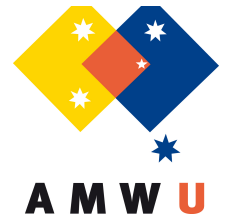
"Either the Minister doesn't understand the point of a continuous build, or he's setting the stage for pulling the plug on the industry, and blaming workers and the industry rather than taking responsibility himself," Mr Thompson said.

"We're still effectively in limbo and thousands of jobs in Adelaide still hang in the balance because the government hasn't had a clear commitment to an Australian build for the future submarine project. The government needs to make clear that the build will occur in Australia, and the process underway is a genuine one that does not favour one of the three options over the other."

More....

The AMWU is urging the Government to give certainty to the industry by reopening the supply ship tender, ordering a fourth AWD as outlined in the 2013 Defence white paper, accelerating the Pacific patrol boats tender

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process and reopening the tender for the Antarctic icebreaker and bringing forward the future frigate build.

“But so far, rather than take actions to fill the ‘valley of death,’ the government’s actions have ensured it doesn’t get filled,” Mr Thompson said.

Glenn Thompson is available for interview.

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