

The \$535 million transformation of the Osborne Shipyard is rapidly taking shape

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Giuseppe Tauriello, The Advertiser

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“Steel in Ships out” - that’s the mantra behind the \$535 million transformation of the Osborne Shipyard rapidly taking shape on the LeFevre Peninsula.

The precinct has become a hive of activity in recent months, with more than 340 construction workers currently on site building the state-of-the art infrastructure that will support delivery of nine new anti-submarine warfare frigates for the Australian Navy.

The Osborne South Development Project (OSDP) is being led by Australian Naval Infrastructure (ANI), a body established by the Federal Government in 2017 to facilitate infrastructure development at Osborne and support the country’s \$90 billion shipbuilding program.

Due for completion in the first quarter of next year, the expanded Osborne South facility will become the epicentre of construction for the \$35 billion Hunter-class frigates program, to be delivered by BAE subsidiary ASC Shipbuilding.

The expansion comprises construction of three large industrial buildings including steel fabrication and block assembly halls.

The third and largest building - a block outfitting and ship erection hall where the frigates will be pieced together - stands 187m long, 87m wide and 50m tall.

It will accommodate two vessels side by side, and is currently visible from the Mt Lofty summit 40km away.

Other works include construction of a blast and paint hall and several smaller buildings.

During a tour of the site this week, ANI chief executive David Knox told *The Advertiser* the project was close to 70 per cent complete, and was set to create one of the world’s most advanced military shipyards.

“This isn’t just any other shipyard,” he said.

“We’re going to have one of the world’s best, if not the world’s best, shipyard here in Adelaide and that’s I think quite special.

“This is going to be a very high-quality sophisticated shipyard, which is capable of being really digitised, and it’s steel in ships out - it’s a very modern military shipyard.”



Australian Naval Infrastructure chief executive David Knox in front of the ship erection hall under construction at the Osborne Shipyard. Picture: Brad Fleet

Osborne is currently a consolidation shipyard - where modules and blocks are fabricated off-site and transported to the precinct for assembly.

However once complete, the expanded facility will support end-to-end production, with raw materials received, fabricated, processed and assembled all on-site.

Assembly will take place in the biggest of the buildings, where an innovative construction technique is currently being employed.

To reduce the need for working at heights, ten 220 tonne wall modules and two roof modules for the ship erection hall have been built on the ground, and are progressively being rotated into place with hydraulic jacks using a technique known as “strand-jacking”.

Supporting managing contractor Lendlease on the OSDP are 57 subcontractors, 54 of which are local Australian businesses.

Mr Knox, a former chief executive of oil & gas giant Santos, says local engagement on the project has been an important consideration.

“89 per cent of the steel’s Aussie, we’ve got 53 out of 57 companies are Australian companies, all the labour out there is Australian, nearly all the steel’s Australian,” he said.

“SA Structural and Samaras have done all the steel work for us - we’ve focused very much on Australian companies.

“The only thing we’ve had to buy in Europe is we’ve bought the world’s best cutting and welding equipment.”



Artist's impression of the \$535 million Osborne South Development Project. Image: Defence Department.

After taking over control of the site in July next year, BAE's ASC Shipbuilding arm will relocate its Hunter project team from the CBD and other sites to the new Osborne hub.

ASC Shipbuilding managing director Craig Lockhart said it would then commence a two-year prototyping phase before construction of the first frigates commences in 2022.

“Fundamentally it’s about preparing the shipyard,” he said.

“We’re bringing a new shipyard with a different workforce, with an integrated design, a digital design - we’ve got to make all of that work and that’s really what prototyping’s about.

“I think the picture of a digital shipyard is something that’s as automated as we can on day one - highly productive, low manual handling, parts of it mechanised to start with - it’s a journey.”

As the southern part of the Osborne Shipyard prepares for BAE’s arrival next year, early works have also commenced on major infrastructure improvements to Osborne’s northern precinct.

Development at Osborne North will include new warehousing, workshops and wharf upgrades, to accommodate Naval Group’s \$50 billion program to build 12 new Attack-class submarines.

By the mid to late-2020s, close to 5200 shipbuilding workers are expected at Osborne.

With the influx of workers to the precinct, Mr Knox welcomed a draft master plan for the broader LeFevre Peninsula area, developed by Renewal SA to improve amenities for visitors.

“We want to make it somewhere that people really want to come and work,” he said

“We also want to provide somewhere where both the local communities, the shipyard workers and everybody else can go walking, buy a coffee and we’re thinking about having somewhere where we can bring schoolkids, etc. to see what’s going on here - a visitor centre that allows people to come and see.

“The Commonwealth’s going to spend \$90 billion here over the next 40 or 50 years - the public’s going to be very interested, so we would very much like to engage the public so we can attract youngsters ultimately into shipbuilding and perhaps into defence.”