



Engineering a pathway for more female employees

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MECHANICAL engineering student Nicola Higgins is aiming for a career in shipbuilding, with decades of work ahead in Adelaide.

But first, she's got to navigate disruption to studies from the pandemic.

"It's been very challenging," said Ms Higgins, who is in her third year at UniSA. "A lot of my classes are hands-on and we haven't been able to take part in the practicals."

She has done the work using data from tutorial teachers who conducted ex-

periments as students watched by video.

She spoke to *The Advertiser* for International Day of Women in Engineering, celebrated today.

Engineers Australia estimates South Australia has about 19,000 engineers – 44 per cent born overseas, and only 12 per cent female.

Ms Higgins, 20, doesn't feel daunted by being in a field dominated by blokes.

"It doesn't bother me," she said. "If anything, it makes me want to work harder."

She has applied for an internship at ASC where Adelaide University graduate

Melissa Weston leads work on submarine noise patterns.

"It's about trusting in what you know, your skills, and having the passion and the drive for it," Ms Weston said.

While she was often the only woman in the room at work, she did not "let it define me".

The Naval Shipbuilding College is assisting women to identify pathways into the industry.

Chief executive Ian Irving said 14 per cent of the college's workforce register were women "and our goal is to continually increase this percentage".

FUTURE FOCUS: ASC mechanical engineer Melissa Weston with third year UniSA mechanical engineering student Nicola Higgins at the ASC in Osborne. Picture: KERYN STEVENS