

# New kit on the frigate blocks

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MG Engineering managing director Anthony Brdar, trainee Shaquille Burgoyne, ASC shipbuilding strategy director Sharon Wilson and Murra Services chief executive Gavin Wanganeen Picture: Brenton Edwards

SA shipbuilder MG Engineering has been chosen to build four “mini blocks” to be used to test leading edge manufacturing techniques for the \$35bn future frigates program.

ASC Shipbuilding has signed a contract with MG Engineering to build the modules, which will mirror ship blocks to be used in construction of the Hunter-class frigates.

Each six metre block will have similar features to a real ship block, including watertight doors, manholes, hatches, passageways and confined spaces.

The blocks will be installed at the Tonsley innovation district later this year, where ASC Shipbuilding is partnering with Flinders University to research advanced manufacturing processes for future use at the state-of-the-art digital shipyard at Osborne.

Researchers will undertake a range of trials including conducting confined-space robotic blast and paint work, implementing electronic tag boards, testing wireless connectivity and applying various adhesives and paints. The four blocks will also be used for training and to showcase research and technology opportunities to students.

MG Engineering managing director Anthony Brdar said the project would help educate the next generation of shipbuilders in South Australia.

"This is a unique project and we are thrilled to have collaborated with ASC Shipbuilding in developing the mini-blocks concept," he said.

"ASC Shipbuilding has showcased innovative ideas and technology capabilities and we look forward to growing our involvement in Australia's shipbuilding industry."

As part of the project MG Engineering has contracted local Indigenous company Murra Services to apply the protective coating on the blocks, providing a training opportunity for trainee Shaquille Burgoyne.

Murra Services chief executive Gavin Wanganeen said he was excited about being involved in the frigates program.

"My vision is to empower young Indigenous people to work alongside established, capable companies, giving them a taste for various trades while working on significant projects like the Hunter program," he said. "As a young Indigenous person growing up in Salisbury I was lucky to find football. Murra Services is all about creating training and employment opportunities for young people and giving back to local Indigenous communities." ASC Shipbuilding CNS (Continuous Naval Shipbuilding) strategy director Sharon Wilson said the company was committed to creating and developing 15-20 new Indigenous businesses through the Hunter program. "We commend MG Engineering on creating opportunities for First Nation businesses and we encourage other suppliers to do the same," she said.

"Contracts like this underpin our effort to maximise Australian industry capability on the Hunter-class frigate program and to develop a continuous naval shipbuilding capability for Australia." The prototyping stage of the Hunter program is set to begin in December, with manufacturing of the first of nine frigates to begin in 2022. Each frigate will comprise 22 blocks which will be manufactured and consolidated on-site at Osborne.