

Shipyard jobs hit target – with more on horizon

CLAIRE BICKERS



A PUSH to attract thousands of workers to build the Future Submarines and Future Frigates has hit a new milestone, with more than 4000 people signing on to a workforce register.

South Australians are leading the pack, accounting for 47 per cent – or almost 2000 – of those signing up.

The workforce register, run by the Naval Shipbuilding College at Osborne, links people to employers or to training providers so they can upskill to enter the new sector.

Of those who have signed on, more than 1000 people are already “employmentready” and another 900 are in training. SA will need more than 4000 people to work directly on the Attack-class submarines and Hunter-class warships by 2030, and thousands more workers in the supply chain.

Former Holden engineers Florin Alexandru, Kevin Tan and Tony Callisto have already made the jump into shipbuilding after a combined 35 years working for the carmaker. The trio used to work together sourcing machines for the Elizabeth factory but made the switch to Naval Group, which is designing the subs, when it became clear the car plant was closing.

“All three of us felt very proud to be a part of a company like Holden,” Mr Alexandru said. “It was such a big part of SA for a long time and loved by the public.

“Submarines and cars are obviously very different, but many of the skills are similar. It’s all about getting the planning right so that you can manufacture the best quality product”. Naval Group Australia plans to hire about 250 local workers this year and 1700 over the next decade.

Chief executive John Davis said the company was developing training programs, looking to



Former Holden workers Florin Alexandru, Kevin Tan and Tony Callisto, who had a combined 35 years' experience at the carmaker, are working with Naval Group Australia. Picture: Keryn Stevens



attract workers from other industries, and would provide on-the-job training to grow its workforce. There was a "very significant base of existing talent in the SA economy", he said. "Many of those people can be transferred into the Attack-class program with bridging training on our particular tools and processes," he said.

"We are actively examining options to redeploy skilled people who have been made redundant at other South Australian businesses to bring their extensive experiences and knowledge into our team." Defence Industry Minister Melissa Price, pictured, said "a generation of jobs" was coming to Adelaide and the government's Naval Shipbuilding College was working to fill them with skilled employees. "Our plan is to ensure there are clear career pathways for jobseekers," she said. National Shipbuilding College chief executive Ian Irving said the college had been looking to attract workers from other industries, particularly those hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specialist engineers are among 18 priority job fields the college believes will be needed in the next three years.