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Shipbuilders celebrate campaign victory

Shipbuilding workers across the country can breathe easier after a Federal Government announcement on submarines all but guarantees a generation of shipbuilding jobs. The announcement today of majority Australian submarine build by French company DCNS follows a concerted worker-led campaign and a long period of uncertainty in the industry.

CEPU South Australian secretary John Adley said it was impossible to overstate the importance of the announcement, despite the government's failure to build all of the submarines locally.

"This is the culmination of a four-year campaign that highlights the importance of keeping shipbuilding and other defence industries in Australia," he said. "We are disappointed that some of the manufacturing jobs that should have gone to Australian workers will be shipped offshore, but the fact that we retained the majority of them is a definite victory."

"Our members and other shipbuilders have been vindicated after a period of terrible difficulty and uncertainty as two successive Prime Ministers prevaricated on this decision."

Since 2012, shipbuilding workers across the country have been engaged in a campaign to pressure the government to agree to a local build of ships and submarines.

"Union members, their delegates and officials have rallied around the country. We have travelled back and forth to Canberra to repeatedly lobby all sides of politics. For workers to have those efforts rewarded is immensely satisfying."

"We've had to drag the government kicking and screaming into preserving our onshore defence industries," he said. "Two years ago this government was ready to send shipbuilding jobs along the same dark path as the automotive industry. We held them back and we made them change their minds."

The build and maintenance of 12 submarines is expected to cost \$50 billion over 30 years and will create thousands of direct and indirect jobs across the country.

"It's not just the people directly employed by the shipbuilding companies, but entire supply chains and manufacturing industries that have been buoyed by this news," Mr Adley said.

"We have already seen shipbuilding decimated in Melbourne and Newcastle, as well as here in Adelaide. We hope that this decision marks the beginning of an ongoing commitment to local builds that will see the 1800 workers who have already lost their jobs re-hired as the industry receives the support it deserves."

Shipbuilding workers remain intent to see the decision through to delivery after the Government made a similar commitment in 2013, prior to the federal election.

"The fact that bidders were invited to submit proposals for offshore builds after the promises we heard in 2013 illustrates our need to keep the government to its word," Mr Adley said.

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