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Novel ways to new jobs

TORY SHEPHERD
STATE EDITOR

NAVAL consultants BMT have partnered with the University of South Australia to help create “adaptable engineers” who can move from the automotive industry to submarines and warships.

While Holden workers have lost their jobs, the submarine and shipbuilding industry is just ramping up and looking for staff – but the skills are not directly transferable. Meanwhile, other advanced manufacturing industries are springing up.

BMT managing director Peter Behrendt said the collaboration could also help people outside the industry find a niche.

“It’s that first step in a journey – to take a lay person and give them a leg up,” he said.

The collaboration will include short courses in disciplines including submarine design and maritime architecture. There will also be specific positions to bring industry and the university together, including a sponsored PhD in maritime engineering. Experts from BMT will be brought in to lecture students.

Mr Behrendt said the \$90 billion naval shipbuilding program, the backbone of which is a fleet of nine Future Frigates and 12 Future Submarines, is a “national enterprise”.

“We’re an independent

naval consultancy. We don’t have a raging profit motive,” he said. “We’re here to do good and interesting work. Part of our brief is bringing people up to speed on submarine and warship design.”

He sees the partnership as building a connection between a range of industries from car design, to warship design – and possibly eventually back to car design.

Professor Duncan Campbell, the head of engineering at UniSA, said they were overhauling the course to take advantage of the booming defence industry.

He said a key part of that was building “plug and play” courses so students can customise their career strategies and that working with industry was a key part of that. He said students were able to become “adaptable engineers”.

“It’s highly transferable. If you look at modern and future defence systems and modern and future industry, the characteristics (are the same),” he said.

“What grabs their attention is that this is a career-long activity in SA so we’re talking working careers of maybe 50 years. Their entire working career.”

One of those students is Jared Heenan, who is doing a Master of Design (industrial design). He has been doing work on how submariners will

move around the sleeping berths on the boat. “I’m pretty keen to stay on the project if we can pick up the work,” he said. “I’d love to stay local.”

Mr Heenan said many students knew about and talked about the opportunities in shipbuilding.



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SHIPSHAPE: Uni SA students Jared Heenan, Alex Hayes and John Nicholl are part of a partnership between the university and naval consultants BMT.