

3 March 2017

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: jsct@aph.gov.au

To the Secretary,

Inquiry into the Framework Agreement for the Future Submarine Program

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Framework Agreement for the Future Submarine Program (the Agreement).

As the union that represents naval shipbuilding workers, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union has a keen interest in all aspects of the Future Submarine Program (FSP).

The AMWU supports the Agreement and encourages both governments to work closely together to ensure that the intent and substance of this agreement are brought to fruition.

As highlighted in our recent submission to the Senate inquiry into the Future of Australia's naval shipbuilding industry, it is vital that the government involve the Australian industry from the very beginning of this project. The AMWU recommends that submission to the Committee.

Involvement in the design phase will be vital to the overall success of the project, will help to reduce risk, low costs and it gives the greatest return on investment to the Australian community. The AMWU is heartened to see that sentiment included in the Agreement.

It is important that the governments work together to ensure that the relevant material, including classified information and intellectual property owned by DCNS and the French Government, are transferred to appropriate Australian entities in a timely fashion in accordance with articles 5 and 6 of the Agreement.

The AMWU also supports the intent behind Articles 13, to encourage Australian industry involvement and 14, to collaborate on research and development. This, combined with clause 9 of Article 6 (which states that all information created during the project will be owned by Australia), will set up the Australian naval shipbuilding industry to play a key role in this project. Importantly, it will also allow the Australian industry to develop its own intellectual property and enter the global supply chain for naval ship building.

It is incumbent on the Australian government to use the Agreement to deliver the “information, know-how, know-why, skills and experience” (Article 13) that the Australian industry needs if it is to play a meaningful role in this project. Without that level of collaboration, Australia will not be able to achieve the sovereign capability to design, build and sustain its fleet of submarines.

The relationship between Australia and France through the FSP will continue for decades and the Agreement is a good first step at ensuring that it is a success. However, for that to happen, both governments must ensure that this agreement is actively pursued and frequently revisited. Any roadblocks to the involvement of industry, from the design phase onwards, must be removed quickly and with a minimum of bureaucratic interference.

The AMWU supports the Agreement and will be monitoring its implementation closely.

Kind regards,

Glenn Thompson
National Assistant Secretary
Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union