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10-YEAR REGIONAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY BLUEPRINT LAUNCHED

The region's peak business organisation, Business Illawarra, has today launched a 10-year blueprint for the development of the Illawarra Shoalhaven's defence industry at a major conference attended by business leaders, defence experts and government decision-makers.

Prepared by KPMG, the *Illawarra Shoalhaven 10-year Defence Industry Strategy* outlines six strategic focus areas that should be delivered in order for the region to play an expanded role in the nation's rapidly growing defence industry sector.

These include: the establishment of a new Illawarra Shoalhaven defence industry alliance, establishing a defence industry innovation ecosystem, playing a greater role in planned and in-flight programs, developing our region's emerging tech contribution to defence, growing the number of major defence prime contractors and growing our pipeline of skilled workers.

Executive Director of Business Illawarra, Adam Zarth, said that the region faced an unprecedented opportunity to contribute to the growing national defence supply chain, and stands to benefit greatly from new, highly skilled jobs and accelerated economic development.

"We have the existing skills and capabilities to go even further in defence industry, and this is about ensuring we have the right planning and collaboration so we can create thousands of new, high-value jobs right here in the region," said Mr Zarth.

"The Strategy we launched today contains key focus areas to leverage our region's strengths, and is based on extensive consultations with industry under the guidance of a working group comprising the many stakeholders already doing great work in defence."

"Now we look forward to working closely with the various government and non-government stakeholders that informed the Strategy in delivering on the clear actions it recommends."

Managing Partner of KPMG Wollongong, Adam Cole, said that he was proud to lead a team of KPMG defence experts to deliver a Strategy they believed would undoubtedly reward the region with a stronger, more diversified defence industry and opportunities for many locals lasting well into the future.

"The Strategy we have developed is about building on the great strengths we have in the region, including our existing defence industry, our world-class university, our steelmaking supply chain and the previous work of many stakeholders."

"More than that, it is also a living document that will support a formal collaboration that we expect will deliver great opportunities and results for the region in the defence industry."

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About Business Illawarra

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, *Business Illawarra* is the region's peak business organisation; a not-for-profit advocacy group dedicated to the economic development of the Illawarra.