

ONGOING SUPPORT FOR FUTURE SUBMARINES

Bipartisan support for the ongoing development of Australia's future submarine program is welcome, according to the Submarine Institute of Australia (SIA).

Confirmation came during yesterday's National Press Club Defence Debate in Canberra, which featured the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, and the Shadow Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy.

While there was disagreement on some aspects of broader naval ship-building strategy, Minister Payne made clear the development of future submarines included a review of the design baseline in the 2020s, with the review to consider rapidly advancing technologies in many fields of science, technology and engineering relevant to submarine design.

SIA spokesman, Christopher Skinner said: "Minister Payne emphasised this did not include nuclear propulsion, for which Australia manifestly lacks the industrial, safety and regulatory frameworks.

"The development of a national nuclear industry in Australia would require some 15 or 20 years to build up the critical mass of academic research and teaching staff, and then to create viable commercial in-country nuclear industrial firms from that base.

"Fortunately, much of the work can be undertaken now using modelling and simulation tools which have only become available in recent years."

The SIA applauded both Minister Payne and Shadow Minister Conroy for their respective performances in the debate.

"The debate was effective and the two participants conducted themselves in a mature, coherent manner which bodes well for national security," Mr Skinner said.

"Whichever of the major parties forms government after the upcoming Federal Election, the defence portfolio will be in good hands."

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The Submarine Institute of Australia (www.submarineinstitute.com) is the premier organisation for promotion of informed discussion and research in the fields of submarine operations, engineering, history and commercial sub-sea engineering, otherwise known as submarine matters.