# Western Australia accelerates as crucial AUKUS submarine industry hub with UK defence partnerships



The Western Australian government is intensifying its efforts to become a pivotal hub in the evolving AUKUS defence partnership, with a focused trip to the United Kingdom aimed at deepening ties and expanding industry opportunities. Premier Roger Cook and Defence Industries Minister Paul Papalia are in the UK for a series of strategic engagements designed to promote Western Australia’s (WA) defence capabilities and expedite the construction of nuclear-powered submarines, a core element of the state’s ‘Made in WA’ economic diversification strategy.

During the five-day visit, the WA delegation is participating in roundtable discussions with defence industry representatives in London and holding high-level talks with UK government officials including Minister of State for Defence Procurement and Industry Maria Eagle, and the UK’s Trade Envoy to Australia, Lord John Spellar. The itinerary also includes a visit to His Majesty's Naval Base in Devonport, the Royal Navy's exclusive nuclear submarine maintenance facility. These meetings build on recent visits by Minister Eagle and Lord Spellar to WA, where they explored the progress of the AUKUS partnership and the bilateral trade and investment environment.

Premier Cook emphasised the importance of developing WA’s economy through the defence sector, stating that the government aims to ensure Western Australia remains the strongest economy in the nation by attracting investment, creating quality jobs, and fostering local industry. Defence Industries Minister Papalia highlighted the state's growing role in supporting submarine construction and sustainment, asserting that local businesses are well positioned to contribute to the Astute-class submarines and other naval projects, exemplifying the benefits of the AUKUS alliance for WA.

The strategic significance of WA in Australia’s submarine ambitions is underscored by the announcement that HMAS Stirling on Garden Island will be home to Australia’s first nuclear-powered submarines as part of the Submarine Rotational Force-West (SRF-West). Starting in 2027, the base will host rotational deployments of UK and US nuclear submarines, with permanent Australian capability expected from the early 2030s through the deployment of US Virginia-class submarines. This initiative is projected to create approximately 500 direct jobs during 2027-2032 and involves major infrastructure upgrades at HMAS Stirling to accommodate these advanced vessels.

In parallel to government efforts, WA is forging strong industry partnerships to strengthen its maritime defence sector. Recently, the state government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UK-based Babcock Australasia to boost maritime defence industry development and workforce training. Babcock supports not only the UK submarine fleet but also Australia’s Collins-class submarines and Anzac Class frigates. This collaboration aims to integrate WA small and medium-sized enterprises into Babcock’s international supply chain, boosting local capabilities and creating skilled jobs at key facilities such as the Australian Marine Complex in Henderson and HMAS Stirling.

Furthermore, the Australian Government has named ASC as the prime contractor for sustaining and maintaining the AUKUS nuclear submarine fleet. ASC, with over three decades of experience maintaining the Collins-class fleet in WA, is expected to generate over 500 new jobs in the next five years, cementing WA’s position as a critical node in the AUKUS defence architecture and supporting long-term employment for local workers.

Complementing these efforts, a large defence precinct is under development at the Henderson shipyard to support construction, maintenance, and servicing of AUKUS nuclear submarines. This multi-billion-dollar project is deemed the most significant defence industry investment in WA since federation, with an estimated creation of around 10,000 skilled jobs spanning construction, shipbuilding, and submarine maintenance. The comprehensive infrastructure development, involving expanded dry dock facilities and logistics, signals a sustained and expanding defence footprint in the state.

The Australian Government’s broader AUKUS Submarine Workforce and Industry Strategy further aligns with these initiatives, aiming to integrate Australian companies into the construction and sustainment of US Virginia-class and UK Astute-class submarines. This strategy is key to revitalising Australian manufacturing, strengthening the national defence industrial base, and ensuring that WA plays a central role in the rotational submarine deployments and sovereign sustainment capabilities envisioned in the partnership.

Together, these developments reflect a coordinated approach by Western Australia and Australia’s federal government to leverage defence investment as a catalyst for economic growth, workforce development, and strategic sovereignty in the Indo-Pacific region. With the UK and US as pivotal partners, WA is positioning itself as a global centre for advanced naval technologies and industrial collaboration under the AUKUS framework.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/industry/16278-wa-government-travels-to-uk-for-defence-industry-aukus-submarine-talks), [[4]](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/McGowan-Labor-Government/Joint-media-statement---Western-Australia-home-for-Australia%27s-first-nuclear-powered-submarines-20230314)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/industry/16278-wa-government-travels-to-uk-for-defence-industry-aukus-submarine-talks)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/industry/16278-wa-government-travels-to-uk-for-defence-industry-aukus-submarine-talks), [[4]](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/McGowan-Labor-Government/Joint-media-statement---Western-Australia-home-for-Australia%27s-first-nuclear-powered-submarines-20230314), [[6]](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-14/aukus-deal-jim-chalmers-hmas-stirling-expansion-perth-wa/102092058)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook-Labor-Government/Cook-Government-signs-deal-with-major-UK-defence-company-20231213)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook-Labor-Government/WA-Government-welcomes-ASC%27s-appointment-as-AUKUS-sovereign-sustainment-partner--20240322)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-16/new-aukus-submarine-servicing-base-at-hmas-stirling/104478192)
* Paragraph 7 – [[7]](https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2023-03-14/aukus-submarine-workforce-industry-strategy)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/industry/16278-wa-government-travels-to-uk-for-defence-industry-aukus-submarine-talks> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook-Labor-Government/Cook-Government-signs-deal-with-major-UK-defence-company-20231213> - The Western Australian Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Babcock Australasia, a major UK defence company, to bolster the state's maritime defence industry. The MoU focuses on industry development and workforce training, aiming to create high-paying, skilled jobs at the Australian Marine Complex in Henderson and HMAS Stirling on Garden Island. Babcock, which sustains the entire UK submarine fleet, currently supports the Australian Submarine Corporation in maintaining Australia's Collins-class submarine fleet and the Anzac Class Frigates. This partnership is expected to integrate Western Australian small and medium enterprises into Babcock's international supply chain, enhancing local industry capabilities.
3. <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/Cook-Labor-Government/WA-Government-welcomes-ASC%27s-appointment-as-AUKUS-sovereign-sustainment-partner--20240322> - The Western Australian Government has welcomed the Australian Government's decision to appoint ASC as the prime contractor responsible for the sustainment and maintenance of the AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine fleet. ASC has been operating in Western Australia for over 30 years, delivering maintenance for the Royal Australian Navy's Collins Class submarine fleet. This appointment is expected to create over 500 jobs in the next five years, reinforcing Western Australia's key position in the AUKUS security partnership and providing long-term employment opportunities for local workers.
4. <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/media-statements/McGowan-Labor-Government/Joint-media-statement---Western-Australia-home-for-Australia%27s-first-nuclear-powered-submarines-20230314> - Western Australia is set to become the home for Australia's first nuclear-powered submarines, with HMAS Stirling hosting the rotational presence of UK and US nuclear-powered submarines as early as 2027. This initiative, known as 'Submarine Rotational Force-West' (SRF-West), aims to develop Australia's ability to operate, maintain, and safely steward future SSNs by deploying Navy personnel on visiting UK and US submarines. From the early 2030s, HMAS Stirling will house Australia's first sovereign SSN capability—the US Virginia class submarines. The project is expected to create 500 direct jobs over the period 2027-2032 and involves significant investment in infrastructure upgrades at HMAS Stirling.
5. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-16/new-aukus-submarine-servicing-base-at-hmas-stirling/104478192> - A multi-billion-dollar defence precinct is being established at Henderson shipyard to support naval shipbuilding and servicing of AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines. Defence Minister Richard Marles described the project as 'the most significant defence industry offering to Western Australia since federation.' The initiative is expected to create about 10,000 skilled jobs in construction, submarine maintenance, and shipbuilding. The total infrastructure cost is anticipated to be in the tens of billions of dollars, with feasibility studies determining the exact requirements, including the number of dry docks necessary for submarine maintenance.
6. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-14/aukus-deal-jim-chalmers-hmas-stirling-expansion-perth-wa/102092058> - Western Australia will be home to Australia's nuclear-powered submarines from the early 2030s, as part of an $8 billion expansion of Perth's naval base. Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers announced that the expansion will include wharf upgrades, expanded maintenance training, and logistical capacity at HMAS Stirling. The plan also involves more frequent and longer visits of American submarines starting this year, UK submarines from 2026, and rotational deployments of US and UK submarines from 2027 as part of Submarine Rotational Force West (SRF-West). The initiative is expected to create 500 direct jobs to sustain the program from 2027 to 2032.
7. <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2023-03-14/aukus-submarine-workforce-industry-strategy> - The Australian Government has announced the AUKUS Submarine Workforce and Industry Strategy, aiming to develop opportunities for Australian industry to maintain US Virginia class and UK Astute class submarines during their rotational presence in Western Australia. The strategy also focuses on integrating Australian industry into UK and US nuclear-powered submarine construction and sustainment programs, with Australian companies supplying materials and components to these programs. The initiative seeks to establish mechanisms for Australian industry to participate in the Australian, UK, and US nuclear-powered submarine programs, complementing efforts to revitalise Australian manufacturing and strengthen the defence industrial base.