

Whiskey Project secures sovereign watercraft supply chain contract



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By: **Reporter**

Veteran-owned The Whiskey Project has announced the acquisition of boat manufacturer and trusted government supplier Yamba Welding & Engineering (YWE), and globally-renowned maritime design company Naiad to secure Australian defence industry capability and supply chains.

The strategic acquisitions aim to secure Australian defence industry capability in the post-COVID economy and heralds a new era of sovereign design and industrial capability for military and specialist watercraft.

Through these strategic acquisitions The Whiskey Project Group will invest in the wider Australian defence industry eco-system during the COVID-19 crisis and embody the Commonwealth's vision of a robust, resilient and self-reliant sovereign manufacturing industry.

The acquisition further responds to the federal and state government's call for Australian industry to support the Sovereign Ship Building Capability and sustain domestic supply chains. The contract was announced on Wednesday, with transaction completion scheduled for Q4 2020.

The Whiskey Project Group's founders launched their Next Generation Tactical Watercraft to industry acclaim at Pacific 2019 with the Minister for Defence Industry Melissa Price and NSW Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney Stuart Ayres.

Now with YWE's 40 years of watercraft manufacturing experience and Naiad's globally renowned naval architecture expertise, The Whiskey Project Group will be able to support the 2020 Defence Strategic Update and 2020 Force Structure Plan with its comprehensive range of watercraft.

From Naiad and YWE's proven range of commissioned vessels, to the new technology Whiskey Alpha and Whiskey Bravo watercraft, The Whiskey Project Group offers Australia a significant capability advantage with an end-to-end sovereign solution for Defence and maritime security watercraft.

Darren Schuback, co-founder and managing director of The Whiskey Project Group, explained, "Through these business acquisitions The Whiskey Project Group range of watercraft will offer 100 per cent design authority across our portfolio, future-proofing our ability to integrate new and emerging technologies and provide other customised and niche watercraft solutions.

"This will safeguard Australian industry capability and innovation whilst greatly enhancing our federal and state government partners' ability to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving future warfare environment."

In the past 10 years, YWE has built more than 200 vessels for Australian federal and state government agencies, including the Australian Defence Force, Australian Border Force and maritime security agencies, while Naiad, whose designs are built under licence around the world, are popular for a wide range of federal and state government military, law enforcement and rescue agency vessels, as well as commercial, tourism, recreational and Superyacht tender applications.

As The Whiskey Project Group, this expanded family of watercraft will offer its federal and state government partners the industrial assurance and efficiencies of dealing with one sovereign provider, one supply chain of over 50 Australian SMEs and 100 per cent design authority.

Through collaborations with the Centre for Defence Industry Capability and the Defence Export Office, The Whiskey Project Group is also looking to forge global Defence export partnerships, creating further sovereign industrial manufacturing capability.

Schuback said The Whiskey Project Group is looking forward to driving an integrated business growth strategy that incorporates expanding Naiad's licensee footprint across regional Australia, growing YWE's domestic industrial manufacturing capability and future-proofing the integrity of Australian innovations and leading-edge technologies through The Whiskey Project watercraft.

In addition to the commercial, recreational and tourism markets that the Naiad business will now expose them to, the acquisition creates enormous potential for the Australian defence industry.

"Through these business acquisitions, The Whiskey Project Group range of watercraft will offer 100 per cent design authority across our portfolio, future-proofing our ability to integrate new and emerging technologies and provide other customised and niche watercraft solutions," said Schuback.

"This will safeguard Australian industry capability and innovation whilst greatly enhancing our federal and state government partners' ability to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving future warfare environment."