Aspiring shipbuilders and marine engineers met with one of the world’s leading shipbuilders on a tour of Civmec’s shipbuilding facility in Henderson, Western Australia. Students from Cecil Andrews College undertaking P-TECH, a program that provides high school students with industry-supported pathways to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related diplomas and degrees, learnt about opportunities within Australia’s shipbuilding sector when they met with Peter Lürssen, the head of 140-year-old German shipbuilder and designer Lürssen.

Peter Lürssen was joined by Jim Fitzgerald, executive chairman of Civmec, and Mike Deeks, managing director of Forgacs Marine and Defence, representatives from Lürssen’s teaming partners for the $3 billion Offshore Patrol Vessels project.

Lürssen confirmed that the first year of its Shipbuilding Education and Apprenticeship (SEA) program will be funded regardless of the outcome of the SEA 1180 OPV tender and proposes the successful tenderer should continue funding the project to develop emerging talent in Australian naval shipbuilding.

The students also heard about the opportunities for local apprentices as Australia’s shipbuilding industry forges a new path towards an export-oriented future.

Currently under construction as a result of an $80 million investment from the company, when complete, Civmec’s state-of-the-art facility at the Australian Marine Complex in Henderson will be the largest undercover shipbuilding space in Australia, housing about 1,000 workers.

Civmec said the seven-hectare, $80 million facility underpins its commitment to expand its manufacturing facilities in WA, in order to play a lead role in the Commonwealth government’s $89 billion naval shipbuilding program.

Civmec and Lürssen, along with partner ASC, are bidding for the Commonwealth’s SEA 1180 Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) program.
Peter Lürssen said Lürssen, Civmec and ASC shared a commitment to investing in local facilities and talent to prepare the industry for a naval construction boom and to establish Australia as a naval exporter to the region.

“With investment in local infrastructure and skills we can create an innovative sovereign naval shipbuilding capability,” Lürssen said.

“Civmec has already returned advanced manufacturing jobs to Australia and, in investing in this facility, will create even more jobs for young Australians.

“We want naval shipbuilding to be an attractive career path for young, bright Australians like those joining us today. I hope in seeing this facility we can cement in the students’ minds that naval shipbuilding is an exciting and satisfying industry to work in.”

Deeks said the investment in the Henderson facility reflects Civmec and Forgacs’ philosophy, that industry – not government – must do the heavy lifting to ensure the future commercial success of Australia’s shipbuilding sector.

“The government’s continuous naval shipbuilding program provides an incredible platform for us to create a sustainable naval shipbuilding industry in this country but industry must do its bit to create opportunities and jobs,” Deeks said.

“Civmec’s $80 million investment in our Henderson shipbuilding facility reflects how committed we are to Australia’s naval shipbuilding industry over the long-term.”

Forgacs Marine and Defence, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Civmec, will operate the shipyard facility when completed.