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Submission: Universities make important contributions that help underpin the nation's defence, most notably acting as a resource of trained personnel and as a provider of research and development. Though these contributions are well established, there remains ample scope for improved relationships and communication between the university sector and the defence establishment and its suppliers to streamline these contributions.

The new Defence Materials Technology Centre (DMTC) is a new and potentially very significant model for research collaboration with universities, one that complements the work of DSTO in niche areas. As the DMTC embeds itself in the various universities, not only will more defence-related research be undertaken, but we will see a significant increase in the number of technically highly-skilled people joining the defence industry and its supply chain.

Further spin-offs in the DMTC-University collaborative network include: (i) direct support of SMEs that are associated with the defence sector, (ii) uptake from other non-defence SMEs and companies, (iii) skills training in sectors that can be transposed to the civilian sector, and (iv) international interactions in strategic topics with our allies. In short, the DMTC-University model is novel since it becomes stable with the strong third leg of Industry.

Universities with a strong industry focus, such as Swinburne University of Technology, are well suited to research that involves collaboration with suppliers of equipment for Defence, providing customer-focused research. Like the other four dual sector universities, Swinburne also has a thriving TAFE sector that can be integrated into the research and development process in order to provide training courses in the new technology to facilitate take-up by industry.

There is a need for universities to work closer with the DSTO, DMTC and Defence's supplier companies to maximise technical and personnel developments. Assisting this process are mechanisms of adjunct or joint appointments at the universities. Such mechanisms greatly streamline collaborations to the benefit of our Defence. In a like manner, research personnel who are university-based can use the significant resources and equipment that are available across the network of research providers of the DMTC. This is perceived as a synergistic mechanism for collaboration and new ventures that would otherwise be unachievable.

These efficiency gains by which applied R&D is formulated, created, implemented and then disseminated on a time scale of several months rather than several years will not only make Australia defence-capable and defence-ready, but also position us ahead of other nations. This "agile engineering" approach is a direct outcome of the DMTC, an approach that Swinburne wholeheartedly embraces.

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

I agree to my submission being quoted in the Community Consultation Report