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Systems specialist happy to call Shoalhaven home

You could say Vinod Parmar is a man of the world. After all, he's lived, studied and worked in cities across Africa, Britain, Canada, United States and Australia.



CPE Systems Defence and Aerospace Projects Director Vinod Parmar at the company's South Nowra office.

So when he says he's found the best place to call home in the Shoalhaven, it comes with the authority of a lifetime of experience.

What's more, he's backed that up by establishing a branch of a national technology company in Nowra, and is one of the founding members of the Shoalhaven Defence Industries Group which is working to attract more defence-related companies and jobs to the area.

Mr Parmar is the Defence and Aerospace Projects Director for CPE Systems, a national specialised information technology and electronics company that develops hardware and software for applications in a wide variety of industries, including mining, biotechnology, energy, transport, agriculture and the environment.

He arrived in Australia from Canada in 1995 to work for a prime defence contractor, and came to the Shoalhaven in November that year to work on Royal Australian Navy projects. He says he quickly fell in love with the area, and has

never wanted to leave. He helped establish an aviation electronics company in the Shoalhaven a decade ago, and when CPE Systems executives approached him to join them in 2007 he had one condition: that he could stay in the Shoalhaven and set up a branch office of the company here.

"When I started talking to CPE about joining them, they gave me the option of moving to Melbourne," Mr Parmar said. "I said how about I stay in the Shoalhaven and start up an office? Luckily they agreed. The Shoalhaven provides all that is required for a great work lifestyle balance for me and my family."

Mr Parmar heads a small team of computer engineers and software designers based in South Nowra, where they work on a range of projects including aerospace and defence, transport, freight infrastructure and electronics.

Defence projects include developing automatic test and measurements technology for military radio networks and upgrades to legacy

test systems, while civilian projects include developing technology for timber mills to remotely test the density of wood, weighbridges, data logging to record the strain placed on helicopter main and tail rotor blades during operation, upgrades to aircraft fuel pump test systems, ear implant test systems, portable solar cell tester, smart battery charger test system and developing test beds for rail callipers.

CPE Systems has also collaborated with a number of other companies to develop crash-warning technology to alert drivers of oversize heavy vehicles when they were approaching overhead bridges or other potential obstructions, in a project supported by the Roads and Traffic Authority and a grant from Industry & Investment NSW.

"And we can do it from Nowra as easily as anywhere else. In fact, the location is an advantage. We're close to customers in the defence industries (at HMAS Albatross) and I go to Canberra every week, which is only two hours away."

Mr Parmar said lifestyle factors meant the company had no trouble recruiting suitably qualified staff. "Our Senior Software Development Engineer Brett Percy relocated from Melbourne to the Shoalhaven to work with us, because he could see this would be a great move for his family," he said.

Integration Engineer Reece James is a Computer Science graduate from the University of Wollongong who joined CPE in late 2008. He grew up in the Shoalhaven and is delighted to be able to develop his career at the cutting edge of technology in his home area.

Senior Technician David Hager loves the Shoalhaven and the lifestyle it provides, especially working in a technically challenging environment and having the pleasure of enjoying fishing, camping and all the water activities with his family

Mr Parmar regularly participates in careers expos for local high school students and hosts students for work place experience at CPE.

The Shoalhaven Defence Industry Group promotes defence industry capability to attract business, investment and jobs to the region. This case study showcases one of the high tech defence companies already contributing to the Shoalhaven economy.



Megan Cleary
Business Development Manager
NSW Trade & Investment
P: +61 2 4421 1000
E: megan.cleary@business.nsw.gov.au



Greg Pullen
Economic Development Manager
Shoalhaven City Council
P: +61 2 4429 3388
E: pullen@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au



Warren Secombe
Defence Committee
Shoalhaven Business Chamber
P: 0400 123 744
E: info@shoalhavenbusiness.com.au