



Defence industry group takes off at air show

The Shoalhaven Defence Industry Group (SDIG) is flying high after the success of its exhibition booth at the Australian International Airshow and Aerospace and Defence Exhibition at Avalon Airport in Victoria in March.

Members of the Shoalhaven Defence Industry Group at one of their regular meetings: the group includes Megan Cleary, Liz Anderson, Fran Koster, Craig Lee, Richard Tomaselli, Graham Stokes, Sam Tooley, John Higgins, Warren Seccombe, Chris Sievers, Tony Allen, Murray Mortimer, Fabian Anderson, Wally Meyer, Dave Hutchison, David Goodman, Ben Harnwell, Andy Beldom and Brett Weeden.

SDIG formed in May 2010 as an alliance of representatives of companies operating in defence-related fields in the Shoalhaven. It functions as a networking organisation and also is active in trying to attract new defence contractors, business, investment and jobs to the Shoalhaven.

The Australian Defence Forces and defence-related industries already contribute well over \$200 million to the Shoalhaven economy annually, and SDIG's participation in the Avalon Air Show was a key part of its strategy to promote the region's defence industry capabilities to national and international companies.

With support from Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW), SDIG booked a booth in the NSW stand at the airshow's trade exhibition, which attracted thousands of trade and public visitors during the week-long airshow. SDIG also developed a range of marketing material including a DVD, brochure, a directory of Shoalhaven-based defence companies and their capabilities and a website (www.shoalhavendefence.com.au).

I&I NSW Shoalhaven Business Development Manager Megan Cleary ran the booth. She received valuable assistance from SDIG members Warren Seccombe, who is training manager at CAE Australia's helicopter flight simulator complex at HMAS Albatross, and Integra Packaging's Sam Tooley and Matt Hill – all of whom were also at the air show representing their companies but took time out to support the SDIG presence.

The SDIG stand distributed more than 400 copies of the Shoalhaven defence brochure and directory, while visitors showed considerable interest in the DVD which was run constantly in tandem with a Shoalhaven Business Chamber presentation about the area's general business opportunities and lifestyle attractions.

Shoalhaven City Council's booth promoting the Albatross Aviation Technology Park was adjacent to the SDIG booth, further reinforcing the strength of the Shoalhaven's message. Military personnel from HMAS Albatross who were at the show also visited the stand and gave



Pictured at the Shoalhaven Defence Industry Group booth at Avalon Air Show in March (from left): Megan Cleary from Industry & Investment NSW, CAE Australia's Warren Seccombe, Member for Gilmore Joanna Gash and Shoalhaven City Council's Greg Pullen.

their support, as did Federal Member for Gilmore Joanna Gash.

The Shoalhaven group also hosted a business networking event, attended by more than 70 industry representatives.

Many visitors to the stand expressed surprise at the depth of the capability of companies operating in the defence space in the Shoalhaven, and were impressed that industry representatives were prepared to spend time there to promote the region and what it had to offer.

Mr Seccombe said SDIG's participation at Avalon had been a great success.

"I don't think it could have gone much better," he said. "It is always hard to judge the benefit of these kind of things, because companies obviously don't decide to come to the Shoalhaven on the spot. But the important thing is that our name and our capabilities are out there. People (in the industry) now know about us and what we can do here."

Mr Seccombe predicted that the Shoalhaven defence website would also prove a strong marketing tool.

Mr Seccombe, who is also on the Shoalhaven Business Chamber's defence committee, and Vinod Parmar from CPE Systems were the driving forces behind the establishment of SDIG last year.

It has quickly developed into a tight and enthusiastic organisation, which is reflected in the 27 organisations listed in its directory as providing defence-related services in the Shoalhaven. The directory can be viewed on the group's website.

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.



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