



# Australian Marine Technologies

Victoria is home to a world class defence industry that is globally integrated and recognised as the centre of a range of Australian defence industry capabilities including advanced manufacturing, communications, engineering, design and simulation.

Port Melbourne-based company Australian Marine Technologies is leading the way in naval ship design and has had a key role in one of Australia's most successful defence projects, the ANZAC Frigate Project.

In January 2008, Australian Defence Magazine called the ANZAC Ship Project 'the most successful defence project in Australian history'. That's no small compliment, especially when the article also noted that the success of the project was largely down to skill and expertise, rather than luck.

With the support and backing of the Victorian Government, two Victorian-based companies won a large part of the work to design and build the ships, and can be fairly credited with a major contribution to the project's success.

One was the Tenix (now BAE Systems) shipyard in Williamstown and the other – less visible, but no less important – was Port Melbourne based Australian Marine Technologies, together with its then parent company, the ships' designer, Blohm+Voss.

Conceived in 1987 as the local arm of German ship designer Blohm+Voss, who created the company to be its 'man on the spot' for the ANZAC Ship Project, Australian Marine Technologies is the only firm in Australia focused solely on naval design.

Blohm+Voss took the job of creating its Australian presence seriously, transferring many of the fledgling organisation's staff to Germany for up to four years to absorb the company's systems and culture, and learn directly from some of the world's best naval designers.

General Manager Rob Dunbar was one of the staff who joined the company at the very start of that journey.



Mr Rob Dunbar, General Manager, AMT and Mr Piers Fraser, Marine Systems Manager, AMT

"It was a great way to start an Australian enterprise," he says. "We took the best of what one of the most respected naval ship designers in the world had to offer, and then brought it home to apply in a local context."

"By basing ourselves in Melbourne, we had all the benefits of being on the ground to support the local shipbuilder, at the same time as having great access to the experience and expertise of the parent company."

"And, over time, our reliance on our parent scaled back, and we took on more and more primary responsibility for the ship design within the project."

Since those early days Australian Marine Technologies has been through a number of changes and is now privately owned, wholly Australian and fully independent of major defence primes. But even with its impressive Blohm+Voss pedigree, Rob Dunbar doesn't nominate superior technical know-how or ground-breaking design as the secret to the company's success.

Instead he talks about the value of listening to your customer.

This might seem like an old-fashioned philosophy in a world where innovation sometimes seems like the holy grail – but Rob says great new ideas only emerge when you've got a solid foundation.

"Credibility is everything in this business," he observes.

"When you deal with naval clients, you're generally dealing with people who have been working with ships for their whole working lives, often since they joined the Forces at 16 or 18. In fact, you're often working on ships that are their homes and you do have to respect that."

"If you can get a really strong understanding of what the customer wants, and how they want to use it, you are well on your way to developing solutions that will satisfy them. If you really understand their needs, and meet those needs, they'll come back again and again."

Rob says the company's focus on relationships – and of course, the quality of its design – has been key to its growth from a one-project outfit, created to provide the ship design to work on the ANZAC project, into a company that is now exporting Victorian design and project expertise right across the Asia-Pacific region.

As well as working on every class of ship the Royal Australian Navy operates, the company has worked closely with the Royal New Zealand Navy over the last ten years. It has been doing everything for its range of clients from upgrading air-conditioning systems to integrating new weapon systems and determining how to get large army tanks on and off ships.

And their latest project shows that their approach is a saleable quality in itself. Australian Marine Technologies was recently engaged to provide its design and engineering support to an Asian shipyard building vessels for its local navy.

"We've been able to work with them to help lift their game, and achieve the same sort of successes enjoyed by us and Tenix on the ANZAC Ship program."

"We're successfully translating our expertise in naval ship design into a service that organisations right around our region can use to improve their performance."

And, as Rob Dunbar notes, being contracted to show another organisation why you've been so successful is a great endorsement.

The Victorian Government partnered with Tenix Defence (now BAE Systems) to secure for Victoria the \$3 billion project to build two 27,000 tonne Navantia-designed large amphibious ships for the Royal Australian Navy. From its Melbourne office Australian Marine Technologies is supporting this Project directly to the Commonwealth, in providing its independent review and engineering support services.

