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**GOVERNMENT MISSES THE POINT ON SOVERIEGN CAPABILITY**

Designing and building the 12 Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) is the best opportunity for Australia to develop a sustainable, defence export industry.

Labor is committed to delivering Australia's required Defence naval capabilities, including the OPVs, future frigates and submarines, on schedule and to the very best capability standards as required by the Australian Defence Force to do its job.

OPVs are ships we have the skills to design, build and export ourselves. A government confident in our country, confident in our skills and ability, shouldn't be aiming lower than that.

It's only if we have a sovereign capability to design and build ships here that we'll have an exporting, naval shipbuilding industry that will see sustainable, long-term jobs in our country.

The Minister needs to explain how the arrangement announced today – three potential builders spread over two build locations – will lead to an Australian naval shipbuilding industry that has an export capability.

Local design capacity is at the heart of a sustainable export industry. An Australian design house competed to be part of the design team working on this program - a design house that designed ships currently being built for the US Navy.

The Government needs to explain what role Australian designers will play in the development of the OPVs. And if there is no role for Australian designers in the development of these ships, the Government needs to have a very good explanation.

Labor looks forward to hearing that explanation.

**FRIDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2017**