

PCB Connect – Enabling Sovereign Capability was a collaboration between Regional Development Australia Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast (RDAMBSC), the Australian Industry and Defence Network (AIDN), Manufacturing Excellence Forum Sunshine Coast, and Elexon Electronics.

Together we are a group of engaged and motivated organisations who believe Australia's future manufacturing and industry aspirations are underpinned by enhanced assurance in the printed circuit board (PCB) value chain.

PCBs underpin our extensive existing electronics manufacturing. They are the foundation on which to build electronic products that are used extensively across multiple industries from defence, aviation and aerospace, to bio-medical, health, AgTech, robotics and more. Importantly, for Australia to service the more sophisticated requirements identified in our sovereign defence industrial priorities, we need to start building an expanded capability now, as there is a lead in of 3-5 years before a new facility can produce locally fabricated PCBs that are required to produce guided missiles as outlined in The Australian Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Plan.

On 26 February 2025, this collaboration brought together a Leader's Roundtable involving an extended brains trust of expertise, from the breadth of Australia, representing industry, government and academia, to consider the factors that make this issue both compelling and urgent, and to explore the potential next steps and directions needed to unlock Australia's advanced manufacturing in support of the Federal Government's Future Made in Australia initiative.

As part of the discussions, we sought to explore what sovereign capability means for the PCB supply chain and what we want to do to protect and enhance it. We specifically sought to better understand the current capability for sovereign manufacture, along with the associated nature and extent of risks in the supply chain, the opportunities that may exist for transformative change as well as the broader implications of what enhanced PCB manufacturing capacity underpins.

The investment of time and expertise that the Roundtable participants contributed was invaluable. By tapping into this depth of experience and varied perspectives we were able to both challenge our own enthusiasm for this investment and bring a level of balance and optimism for the transformative change that dedicated and strategic investment in enhancing security on the PCB supply chain could deliver at the whole-of-economy level.

Based on the day's discussions, we believe there is a compelling opportunity to move to the next stage to re-establish Australia's position as an at scale manufacturer of PCBs and create a viable and secure alternative to overseas suppliers.

Security of the PCB supply chain is critical to allow us to domestically manufacture all PCB operated in critical infrastructure, defence, national security, and intelligence sectors. PCB that are able to be verified will reduce risks and protect contracts. Government must acknowledge this as an extra requirement and promote the idea of increasing PCB manufacturing in Australia, or in countries that can provide supply chain surety. Any PCB sourced through non-Five Eyes countries are potentially high risk.

Under the Security of Critical Infrastructure Act and the Defence Act there is increasing security requirements, including enhanced DISP cyber prerequisites, demanding ASD Essential 8 Level 2. The Defence Industry Security Program (DISP) is essential for contracts in the defence, national security, and intelligence sectors. It is a high barrier to entry but once achieved, provides surety for government clients and narrows the base of suppliers that can provide PCB. Again, government clients must acknowledge the extra resources needed to achieve and maintain DISP as well as the value achieved through its delivery through genuine sovereign capability.

In summary, to maintain national security requirements, supply chain surety and DISP membership is essential. Government must reinforce these requirements and insist that PCB are manufactured by firms that can guarantee their supply chain and maintain DISP membership.

By hosting this conversation in the Moreton Bay- Sunshine Coast-Noosa economic growth corridor, we sought to put a spotlight on sovereign suppliers and how the capacity within and linkages across the PCB value chain underpin future industry potential at the local level as much as at the national. Our future success will be reliant on many regions rising to the needs and opportunities of our advanced industry future.

This region is but one that stands ready to play a part in this national opportunity. As outlined in the Roundtable discussion, this region boasts a number of compelling attributes that would support Australia in scaling its sovereign industrial capability in PCBs including:

- Being a major economic growth corridor
- Having proximity to the capital city, road / rail / port / air infrastructure and industrial land
- High speed digital infrastructure and connectivity
- Quality and growing manufacturing industry base
- Access to skills, talent and research / education facilities

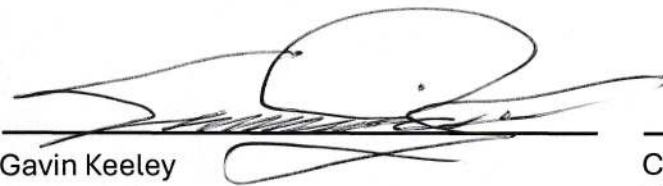
We believe that having a centre of competency here in Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast would attract other business that play in the field of electronics and related industries, and would also underpin other regions activating on and expanding the available opportunities. We know we need to act swiftly; but there is no one investment that will address this issue and create the change envisioned by the partners. We need to make inroads on this opportunity through a

suite of activations and investments, from all parts of the ecosystem – and rally in behind each other to drive this change further and faster.

As an outcome of this event, we share this Communique with the Roundtable participants and the broader community as a record of the discussions. We ask only that you share this message through your networks and provide your own perspective on the conversation and the potential value of the opportunity before us. If this document empowers further conversation and further progress of deliberations, it has done its job.

Through these conversations we seek to make electronic manufacturing a priority at the national level – for it to be recognised as a building block of our manufacturing value chain and an enabler of future security, jobs and prosperity.

Signed by the event partners on 26 February 2025:



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