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AS SUBS SKILLS CRISIS DEEPENS, TURNBULL GOVERNMENT WAFFLES

The Turnbull Government has left Australia's submarine program unacceptably exposed to risk with only one person in the safety-crucial role of naval architect.

The revelation underscores the Turnbull Government's failure to match word with deed in addressing Australia's looming Defence skills shortage.

As [revealed](#) by *Fairfax*, the Department of Defence has only one in-house naval architect with submarine expertise to oversee our current Collins Class and future submarines program.

The job of ensuring the stability and safety of all existing and proposed naval vessels cannot credibly be performed by one person with Commonwealth oversight alone.

The Department of Defence is in an impossible situation where it can no longer retain the skills it needs as it is forced into an untenable bargaining position as the Turnbull Government continues to drag out the EBA process.

The Royal Institution of Naval Architects has warned that current naval architecture staffing levels represent "functional disintegration", posing "significant risks" to Australia's defence [capabilities](#).

The 2016 Defence White Paper made it clear that our defence capabilities have become more technologically complex, and "recruiting Australians with the right skills mix for these capabilities will be even more important."

However, it has become clear the Turnbull Government does not have a strategy to deal with the declining number of Australians who possess the skills in physical sciences and engineering that are so important to the ADF and its industry.

The Turnbull Government's rhetoric has not matched reality.

While the Turnbull Government talks up its commitment to recruiting and retaining key specialist skills, it undermines Defence's capacity to be an employer of choice to the country's best and brightest.

When it comes to skilled professionals in the ADF and industry, our needs are growing while our numbers are shrinking.

The Turnbull Government must explain whether it believes it to be acceptable to have the weight of 18 submarines resting on the shoulders of one in-house naval architect.

If it does not, it must explain why it has ignored repeated warnings and allowed the situation to deteriorate.

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