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Your guide to defence industry careers

2025-2026

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Defence

Discover your future

Australians are good at helping people. Whether it's offering a friend a lift home from school or providing aid to countries going through a tough time, Aussies are always there to lend a helping hand. There are so many ways to help each other out, including in the defence industry.

The defence industry employs a number of highly skilled people from mechanical fitters to naval architects, engineers, IT specialists in areas like robotics, cybersecurity and software engineering, and many more – all to help Aussies or people in need of a hand.

Australia's defence industry is not just one big company or department. It is made up of many different businesses, both small and large, who design, create, maintain and provide the equipment and services used by the Australian Defence Force.

More than 69,000 people are directly employed by the defence industry. If the entire supply chain is included, over 100,000 Aussies work indirectly in the defence industry sector.

As well as employing a lot of people, the defence industry also contributes a lot of money to our economy. It's estimated that the Western Australian defence industry contributes $3 billion every year to the state's economy.

The defence industry is driven by skills in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM). Initiatives at the Australian Marine Complex at Henderson are putting WA at the forefront of naval innovation. With a renewed focus on building new ships and submarines, the demand for STEM skills is at an all-time high.

There are so many ways to be involved in the defence industry, and every single person who is involved plays a key role in helping others and keeping Australians safe.

This guide will introduce some of the people who currently work in the defence industry and show you a snapshot of the diversity that exists within defence industry careers.

69,000

Over 69,000 people are directly employed by the defence industry.

Western Australia's defence industry contributes $3 billion every year to the state's economy.

$3b

480

There are over 480 businesses spanning the maritime, land, air, space, and cyber sectors across the defence industry.

Australia's defence industry is innovating in:

- Quantum technologies
- Hypersonic capabilities
- AI and autonomy
- Advanced cyber systems

8,500

Naval shipbuilding efforts will support 8,500 jobs by 2030.

PERSONALITY TYPE **ADVOCATE**

Ready to connect and inspire?

Advocates love talking to people, sharing ideas and inspiring others. Their knack for clear communication and ability to inspire make them essential in any team setting.

Strengths:

- Great at connecting with others
- Clear and effective communication
- Inspiring and engaging

Advocates usually dislike:

- Working alone all the time

Advocates usually like:

- Team projects
- Roles with lots of interaction
- Creative and dynamic environments

Advocates might enjoy jobs like:

- Program Manager
- Security Analyst
- Drafter

Alex is the director of the WA Data Science Innovation Hub at Curtin University and a member of the AI Advisory Board for the WA Government. After leaving school, he wasn't quite sure what sort of a career he wanted to pursue but always had a burning passion for technology. His current role in the AI world makes sense – as a kid, he used to sticky-tape electronic components onto cardboard and pretend to be an android.

INTERVIEW

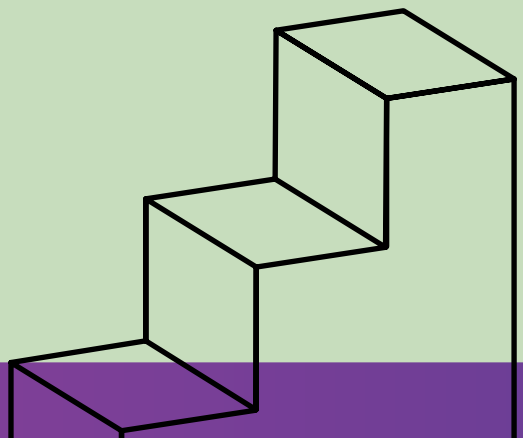
Alex Jenkins

What skills and qualifications helped you the most in getting started?

"Some of the most important skills that I picked up in school and university is having that strong foundation of statistics and maths. I encourage everyone to learn some level of statistics and maths because it helps in any kind of scientific field that you go into. I've tried to refine my communication skills as much as possible, and it really helps to keep things simple when you explain things and to use examples."

What was your learning journey like after school?

"At university, I really jumped around. I left school and I didn't really know what I wanted to do. There were lots of different things I wanted to study. I started off doing a bit of engineering. Then I studied something called cognitive science, which was trying to understand how the mind works. So I did psychology, I did a bit of philosophy. I really jumped around a lot before I settled on that computer science and maths side of things."



Were there any jobs that you tried that weren't right for you?

"I did work for a while as a programmer who was just programming all day. I was up on a mine site and that was hard. I did miss doing a lot of the science communication stuff. I'm really passionate about helping people understand scientific ideas. In my current role, I get to spend a lot of time nerding out on the computer but also a lot of time talking to people about the things that I've learned. That's a really great balance for me."

Do you see AI as a job replacement or as a tool?

"I see AI as evolution from the kind of job changes that we saw when personal computing and the internet came around. We saw a lot of jobs that went out of fashion. There's not many typewriters left in offices anymore but there's a whole range of jobs that didn't exist before. Lots of people are graphic designers, web developers and digital developers. All these jobs didn't exist before the internet was around. I think that the same thing will happen with AI. I think we'll see some job losses, but we'll also see a whole new range of jobs that we can't even imagine at this point in time."

Do you think that your current job will exist in 10 years?

"I think that technology moves so fast that there will always be a place for people who are able to communicate what the latest technology trends are and how to use that – in AI or in any other field."

PERSONALITY TYPE **STRATEGIST**

Want to solve the puzzle?

Strategists are the problem solvers of any group. They love digging into data, finding patterns and coming up with solutions. Their sharp minds and attention to detail make them the go-to people for tackling tough challenges.

Strengths:

- Sharp analytical skills
- Detail oriented
- Solution focussed

Strategists usually dislike:

- Limited problem-solving opportunities

Strategists usually like:

- Analytical roles
- Problem-solving projects
- Data-centric environments

Strategists might enjoy jobs like:

- Aeronautical Engineer
- Cyber Security Specialist
- Business Development Manager

Jessy is a process specialist at Kinetic IT. Inspired by her dad and a chance visit from a university outreach team while she was still in high school, Jessy decided to study computer science at university. Starting in software development and computer coding, a job offer landed her in IT service management. Jessy's work helps to create efficient workflow systems and deliver on real-world business needs to help people.

INTERVIEW

Jessy Singh

Did you go to university or did you take another route?

"I went to university. I was influenced by these individuals from university that were actually visiting our school. I'll be honest, I wasn't like a top student at school. I was doing okay, but I really thrived at uni. I thoroughly enjoyed learning all those different subjects that we unfortunately do not typically learn in a day-to-day school environment. University wasn't just about getting a degree – it actually got me interested in pursuing a career."

What is a typical day or week like in your role?

"The really nice thing about my job, and I think that's why I thoroughly enjoy it, is that there are no two days that are the same. A typical week would include process analysis, where I'm sitting individually and doing a task – for example, assessment of tools or systems. And then you can have process documentation like writing policy, and then another half of the week could be workshopping and meetings and discussions. There is a good balance of the detail-oriented work and there is this high-level design thinking work. I think that's what keeps me excited about my job."

Are there any skills that you've learned on the job that school didn't teach you?

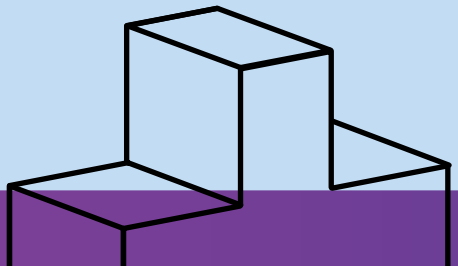
"I think on a day-to-day basis at school or at university we communicate, but it's trying to communicate the whys and trying to get people to adopt to change and managing expectations."

Where do you see your career headed next?

"Everybody's talking about AI. I do think my role will exist, it'll just be complemented by AI. At the end of the day, that human aspect of it, AI can't replace. AI can help you start writing a process. AI can help you maybe figure out bottlenecks or figure out efficiencies. But that human aspect that is trying to implement that change, trying to get the buy-in of the stakeholders that are involved, AI can't replace that."

What would you say to someone who wanted to enter into the tech industry?

"You don't have to be a coding whiz. You don't have to sit down in a dark basement coding from early morning to night doing software development, creating apps. You can have a career in IT or the tech industry by doing something else outside of that. You can have a career in the tech industry without having to have the technical background."



PERSONALITY TYPE **GO-GETTER**

Ready to get things done?

Go-getters are people who love getting things done. They're great at making quick decisions, staying focussed and finishing projects.

Their energy and ability to stay on task make them super valuable in any fast-paced setting. They tend to like hands-on work and solving real problems.

Strengths:

- Quick decision making
- Goal oriented
- High energy

Go-getters usually dislike:

- Slow-paced environments

Go-getters usually like:

- Hands-on projects
- Fast-paced roles
- Dynamic environments

Go-getters might enjoy jobs like:

- Mechanical Technician
- Penetration Tester
- Network Administrator

Floremay is a student completing her Master of Civil and Structural Engineering and works as a project delivery engineer. This position means she helps keep people safe by following quality assurance protocols. Growing up in the Philippines, Floremay was inspired to be an engineer by her brother, who also works in civil engineering, and moved to Australia to pursue her dream.

INTERVIEW

Floremay Daling

There are so many different types of engineering. Can you define what structural engineering is?

"Structural engineering is based solely on the integrity of the buildings or the structures. Structural engineering can also involve construction, project management and material engineering."

Tell me about your experience at university.

"Before coming here to Perth, I was doing my master's degree in business administration at Kaplan Business School. I was asking myself am I really suited to have a master's degree in business administration? My heart told me that I really love structural engineering, so that's why I moved from Melbourne to Perth to pursue my dream course, which is the degree I'm doing right now."

What skills have helped you the most in getting started?

"Being able to communicate well with other people and having a good engineering background has really helped me, especially as a quality engineer. Knowing all of the basic technical standards has really helped me, and all of the subjects I took in my master's degree has really helped me with the technical side as well."

Who inspired you to take up this career?

"My brother helped me, especially with the subjects that I'm not really good at, like the structural analysis stuff. Whenever he came home and whenever he had time, he helped me study those subjects."

What's something surprising about your job that people might not expect?

"As a quality design engineer, a lot of people may not know that it really involves a lot of good communication, engineering decisions and a lot of management and quality standards."

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

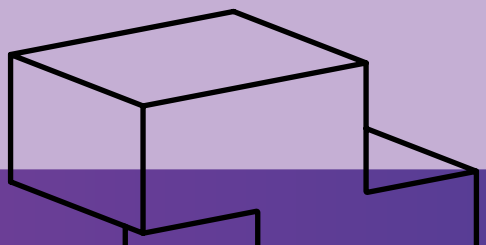
"I can help the people and all our clients when it comes to the standards and the compliance to Australian standards on site and here in the office."

Where do you see your career headed next?

"For the next 5 to 10 years, I can see myself as a project engineer. I really want to lead a team of my own. Because I am doing my master's degree in civil engineering, I really want to be a design manager in the future."

If someone wanted to do structural engineering, where would they start?

"My advice would be to start by having a degree in civil engineering or construction management. It will be easier for you to gain life experiences and hands-on experience. As an international student, it's important not to lose hope. You can have your engineering career here, and it's a really good decision."



PERSONALITY TYPE **INNOVATOR**

Want to create something new?

Innovators thrive on brainstorming new concepts, pushing boundaries and driving creative solutions. Their ability to think big and invent makes them essential in any forward-thinking environment.

Strengths

- Forward thinking
- Creative problem solving
- Transformative ideas

Innovators usually dislike

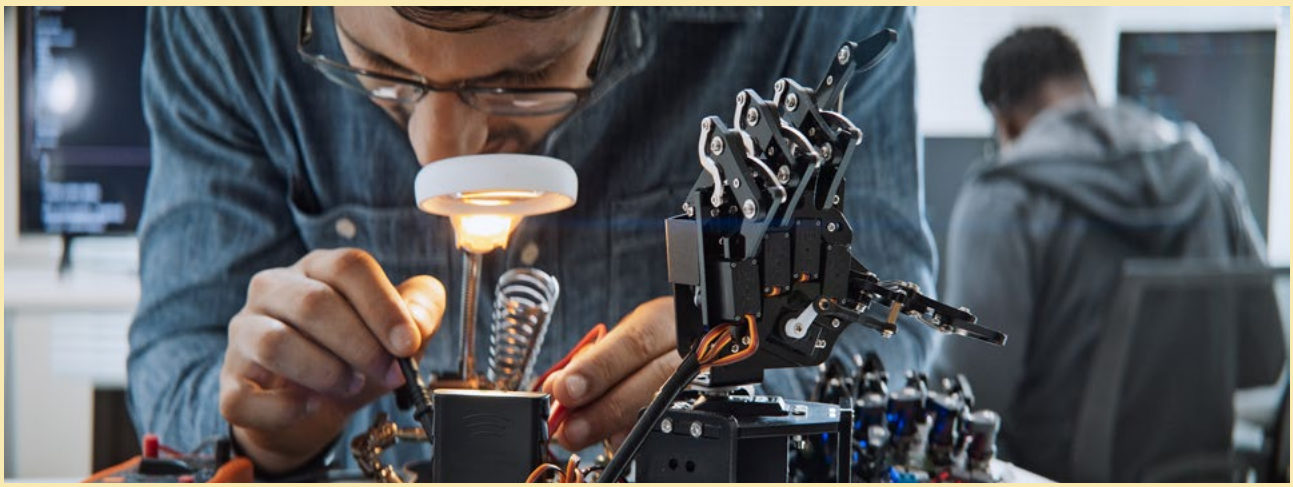
- Routine tasks

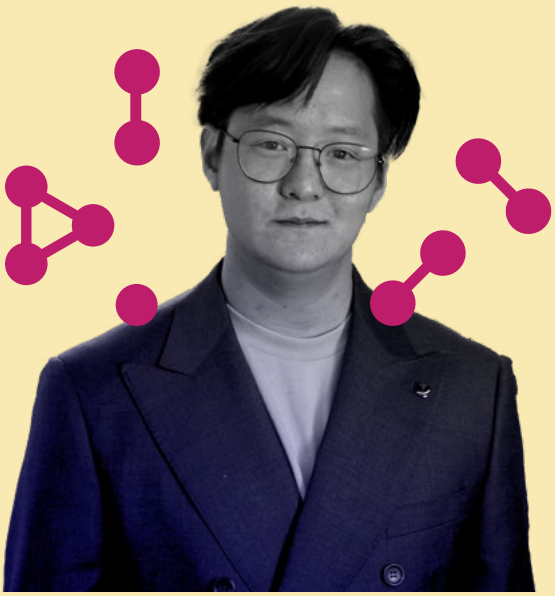
Innovators usually like

- Creative roles
- Conceptual projects
- Cutting-edge environments

Innovators might enjoy jobs like

- Software Developer
- Robotics Engineer
- Naval Architect





James is a software engineer at Babcock Australasia. He wasn't sure what he wanted to do after school, so he followed his friends to software engineering at university. Now he gets to flex his problem-solving and technical skills while upholding Australia's national defence and helping save lives.

INTERVIEW

James Ling

Did you go straight into software engineering from high school?

"Yeah, I did. Nowadays, you don't have to. I know some friends who did a totally different degree and just went to coding boot camp where you learn to code in two or three months. They've got software engineering jobs from that. There's more than one path."

What's the most interesting part of software engineering?

"It's a bit more than just writing code. You get to work in teams and it really brings out your problem-solving capabilities. Code, after all, is a set of instructions. Working in the defence industry is a really interesting field. If you're working in a corporate sector, the goal is to make a profit. But when you're working in the defence industry, especially as a software engineer, problem solving is for the sake of our nation's security. There's an alternative goal at the end of it, and that feels quite fulfilling for me."

What subject did you enjoy at school, and which ones did you not enjoy as much?

"I enjoyed subjects like history. … I sort of enjoyed math. I wouldn't say I was amazing at maths. And you don't have to be amazing at maths for software engineering, especially in high school. The type of math you do is very different from the math you do in high school, it's more logical. I never had strong feelings for subjects in high school, which made it difficult for me because I didn't know what I wanted to do. But I eventually found my way into software engineering."

What's the most challenging part of your job?

"I think for me it's having the courage to push back when questionable decisions are being made, especially in the technical space by people who perhaps don't have technical experience. Having the confidence and the courage to bring that up is something that's actually a very important thing."

What's the most rewarding part of your job?

"I think it's the ability to produce something greater than what I can produce on my own and that going towards defending the country, like this work, will probably save lives. It's not just like a dollar profit thing. It's being a part of something that can change lives"

Career Snapshots

AERONAUTICAL ENGINEER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$100,000-$150,000	$175,000

Design, develop and improve aircraft to make sure they fly safely and efficiently.

Pathways

- Certificate IV in Aeroskills (Mechanical)
- Bachelor of Technology (Aeronautical)
- Bachelor of Engineering

Personality Types

INNOVATOR
STRATEGIST

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$165,000-$205,000	$235,000

Identify, pursue and cultivate new business opportunities to improve products and drive growth.

Pathways

- Certificate IV in Entrepreneurship and New Business
- Diploma of Business
- Diploma of Project Management
- Bachelor of Business
- Bachelor of Commerce

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
ADVOCATE

COMBAT SYSTEMS ENGINEER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$115,000-$165,000	$185,000

Develop, implement and service systems utilised by vehicles operating in the air, at sea and on land.

Pathways

- Diploma of Engineering – Advanced Trade
- Bachelor of Electrical Engineering
- Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering
- Bachelor of Mechatronic Engineering

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
INNOVATOR

CYBER SECURITY SPECIALIST

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$90,000-$140,000	$180,000

Design and test software and systems that keep classified and sensitive information safe.

Pathways

- Certificate IV in Cyber Security
- Advanced Diploma of Cyber Security
- Bachelor of Computer Science
- Bachelor of Information Technology
- Bachelor of Cyber Security

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
INNOVATOR

DATA ANALYST

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$90,000-$100,000	$135,000

Look through data and find hidden patterns to drive informed decision making and innovation.

Pathways

- Certificate IV in Information Technology (Data Science and AI)
- Bachelor of Data Science
- Bachelor of Computer Science

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
ADVOCATE

DRAFTER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$80,000-$100,000	$125,000

Turn ideas into detailed blueprints, plans and maps to bring complex machinery to life.

Pathways

- Certificate IV in Civil Construction
- Adv Diploma of Civil and Structural Engineering
- Bachelor of Mechatronic Engineering
- Bachelor of Civil Engineering

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
ADVOCATE

Salaries courtesy of Kinexus Defence Industry Insights Eleventh Edition. Salaries are full-time annual salary plus statutory superannuation.

ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$90,000-$135,000	$165,000

Design and manage electrical systems – from satellites to submarines.

Pathways

- Diploma of Engineering – Advanced Trade
- Bachelor of Electrical Engineering

Personality Types

INNOVATOR

STRATEGIST

ELECTRICAL TECHNICIAN

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$80,000-$120,000	$140,000

Get hands-on with electrical systems and equipment for construction, check for faults and malfunctions, and make urgent repairs.

Pathways

- Diploma of Engineering – Technical
- Advanced Diploma of Engineering (Mechanical)
- Bachelor of Electrical Engineering

Personality Types

STRATEGIST

GO GETTER

MARINE TECHNICIAN

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$80,000-$120,000	$140,000

Inspect, maintain, repair and modify boats, submarines and other watercraft.

Pathways

- Certificate III in Marine Mechanical Technology
- Certificate IV in Maritime Operations
- Diploma of Marine Engineering
- Advanced Diploma of Marine Engineering
- Bachelor of Maritime Engineering

Personality Types

STRATEGIST

GO GETTER

MECHANICAL ENGINEER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$90,000-$135,000	$165,000

Solve problems to make sure machines and equipment get the job done.

Pathways

- Advanced Diploma of Engineering (Mechanical)
- Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering

Personality Types

INNOVATOR

STRATEGIST

MECHANICAL TECHNICIAN

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$90,000-$135,000	$165,000

Get hands-on with machines and equipment to keep them running smoothly.

Pathways

- Certificate III in Engineering – Technical
- Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering

Personality Types

STRATEGIST

GO GETTER

NAVAL ARCHITECT

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$100,000-$145,000	$165,000

Combine engineering precision with innovative design to create vessels that are seaworthy, safe and efficient.

Pathways

- Certificate III in Marine Craft Construction
- Bachelor of Naval Architecture Engineering

Personality Types

STRATEGIST

INNOVATOR

Career Snapshots

NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$85,000-$110,000	$135,000

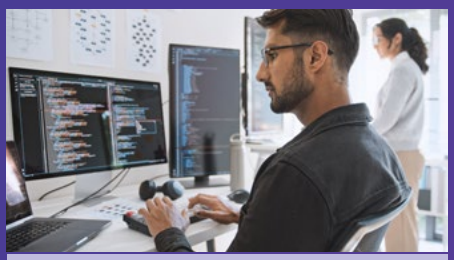
Set up, maintain and optimise hardware and software systems to keep communication networks running smoothly.

Pathways

- Diploma of Information Technology
- Advanced Diploma of Information Technology (Cyber Security)
- Bachelor of Computer Science
- Bachelor of Information Technology
- Bachelor of Cyber Security

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
GO GETTER



PENETRATION TESTER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$110,000-$155,000	$175,000

Find vulnerabilities and exposures in networks before the bad guys do.

Pathways

- Certificate III in Information Technology
- Certificate IV in Cyber Security
- Diploma of Information Technology (Cyber Security)
- Bachelor of Computer Science
- Bachelor of Cyber Security

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
GO GETTER

PROCUREMENT MANAGER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$165,000-$180,000	$220,000

Source, negotiate, manage and optimise procurement processes for a variety of goods and services.

Pathways

- Diploma of Business
- Diploma of Logistics
- Bachelor of Business (Logistics and Supply Chain Management)
- Bachelor of Business

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
ADVOCATE

PROGRAM MANAGER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$120,000-$165,000	$195,000

Work with individuals, groups and businesses to help deliver ground-breaking projects.

Pathways

- Certificate IV in Building Project Support
- Diploma of Business
- Diploma of Project Management
- Bachelor of Project Management
- Bachelor of Business Management

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
INNOVATOR

ROBOTICS ENGINEER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$90,000-$135,000	$165,000

Develop, implement and service systems utilised by vehicles operating in the air, at sea and on land.

Pathways

- Advanced Diploma of Process Plant Technology
- Bachelor of Mechatronic Engineering

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
INNOVATOR

SECURITY ANALYST

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$85,000-$110,000	$125,000

Watch for suspicious activity, investigate breaches and ensure security measures are always one step ahead of hackers.

Pathways

- Certificate II in Applied Digital Technologies
- Certificate III in Information Technology
- Certificate IV in Cyber Security
- Diploma of Information Technology (Cyber Security)
- Bachelor of Computer Science
- Bachelor of Information Technology
- Bachelor of Cyber Security

Personality Types

STRATEGIST
ADVOCATE

Salaries courtesy of Kinexus Defence Industry Insights Eleventh Edition. Salaries are full-time annual salary plus statutory superannuation.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$80,000-$110,000	$150,000

Write, debug and optimise code to create innovative software solutions that meet diverse user needs and project requirements.

Pathways

- Diploma of Information Technology
- Advanced Diploma of Information Technology (Cyber Security)
- Bachelor of Computer Science
- Bachelor of Information Technology
- Bachelor of Cyber Security

Personality Types

GO GETTER

INNOVATOR

SYSTEMS ENGINEER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$90,000-$125,000	$150,000

Integrate mechanical, electrical and computer systems to develop sophisticated, multi-functional solutions.

Pathways

- Diploma of Information Technology
- Advanced Diploma of Information Technology (Cyber Security)
- Certificate IV in Cyber Security
- Advanced Diploma of Cyber Security
- Bachelor of Computer Science
- Bachelor of Electrical Engineering
- Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering

Personality Types

STRATEGIST

INNOVATOR

TEST AND ACTIVATION ENGINEER

Entry Level Salary	Experienced Salary
$100,000-$130,000	$165,000

Keep systems working properly by performing tests, troubleshooting issues and documenting results.

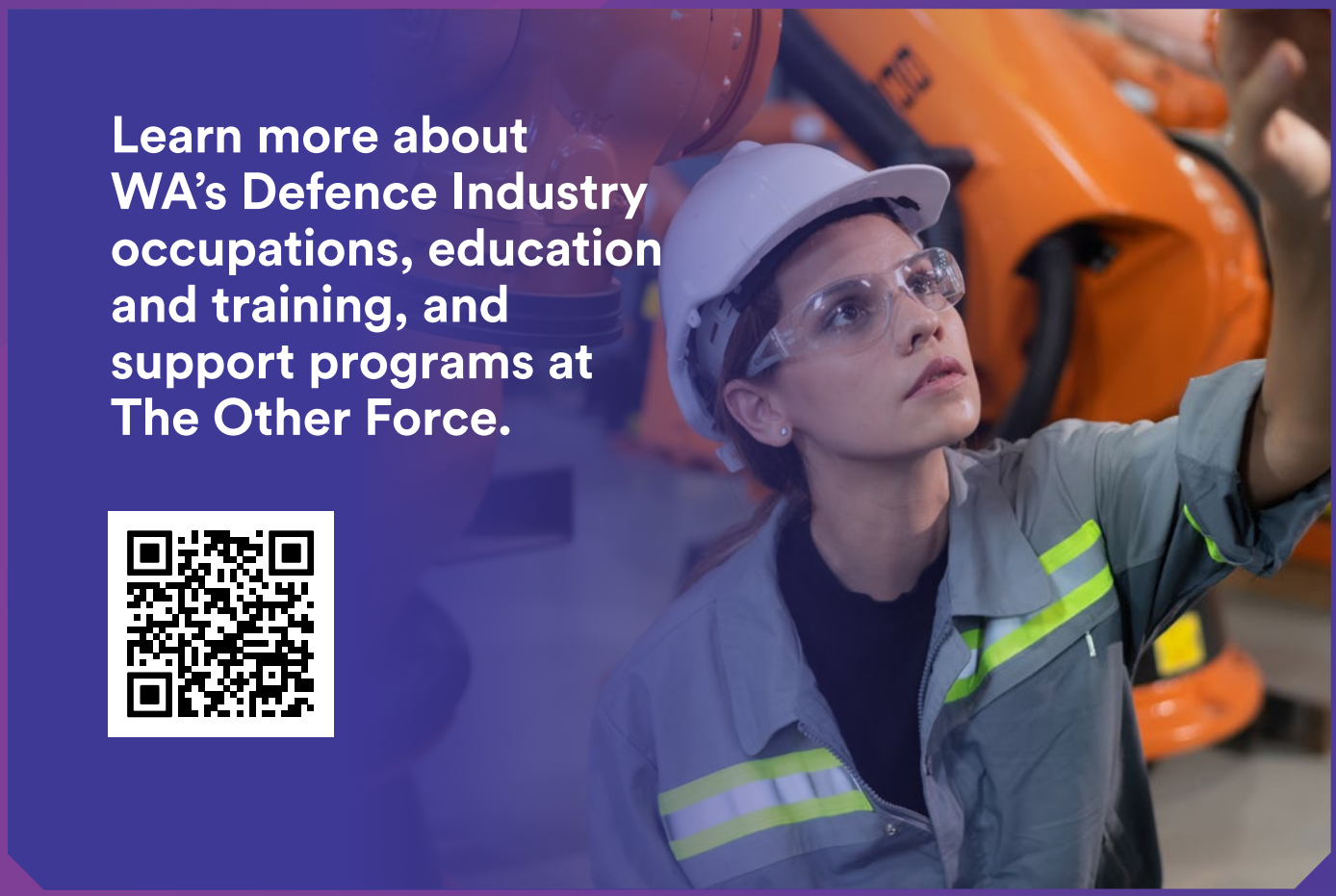
Pathways

- Advanced Diploma of Information Technology (Cyber Security)
- Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering
- Bachelor of Software Engineering
- Bachelor of Civil Engineering

Personality Types

INNOVATOR

STRATEGIST



Learn more about WA's Defence Industry occupations, education and training, and support programs at The Other Force.

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