

# Drone Forge supports veterans

Company background and veteran commitment

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**Service does not end when the uniform comes off.** It carries on in the skills people bring home, in the families who served alongside them, and in a transition to civilian life that is too often harder than it should be. Drone Forge grew out of that understanding. It shapes the capability we build for Australia, the people we employ to build it, and the causes we choose to stand behind.

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## WHERE WE STARTED

Drone Forge was founded by Tom Symes, who leads the company as Chief Executive Officer. His brother Ben Symes serves as Chief Operating Officer. Before it was a company it was a household — one organised, for most of their lives to date, around their father's 27 years of service with Australian Special Forces.

Service of that length sets the rhythm of a family. There are absences that cannot be explained at the time and departures at no notice. There is a standard of preparation, accountability and self-discipline that is assumed rather than taught, because it is simply what the house ran on. Both grew up inside that, and it remains the baseline we measure our own work against.

We also saw the other half of it, which is the part that happens afterwards. A career of that length ends, and what follows is a transition into a commercial and private sector that does not always know how to read what a person is carrying. Judgement that was decisive in uniform gets discounted because it does not map onto a civilian job title. Networks built over decades sit outside the industries that are hiring. The identity that came with the role has to be rebuilt without the structure that held it in place. None of that is unique to our family — it is the ordinary experience of thousands of Australians every year, and it is largely invisible to anyone who has not lived beside it.

Drone Forge was built to support the missions that people in uniform are sent to carry out. From the outset it was also meant to support what happens to those people afterwards. We do not regard those as two commitments. They are the same commitment, held at different points in a person's life.

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## WHAT WE DO

Drone Forge Ltd is an Australian sovereign capability company. We are a defence-grade operator that also executes commercial work — in that order. We cover the full uncrewed systems lifecycle: manufacturing, assembly, integration, maintenance and sustainment, operations, and training. We are platform-agnostic across a wide OEM base, selecting capability on merit rather than on vendor relationship.

The effect of that model is straightforward. Skills, infrastructure, sustainment and technical authority stay in Australian hands, and the people who hold them are employed here.

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## VETERANS AT DRONE FORGE

Five of our 23 personnel are veterans, as at September 2026. That is not a quota and it is not charity. Veterans arrive with leadership, technical depth, judgement under pressure and a tolerance for ambiguity that is difficult to train for. Several of our senior operational appointments are held by former serving personnel. We intend to keep building that way.

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## COMMON GROUND

Veteran housing, veteran employment and sovereign industrial capability are not separate questions. Each one determines whether service translates into a stable life afterwards, and whether this country keeps the skills it spent years building. Where Drone Forge can lend weight, we back three things:

- **Housing.** We support the organisations working to put former serving personnel into safe, secure accommodation — including where suitable surplus Defence property could be put to veteran use rather than simply disposed of. No one who has served this country should be without a roof.
- **Employment.** We employ veterans and support those who choose to remain active in the workforce after their service. They should be able to continue contributing through their work and taxes without putting at risk the entitlements they have earned. We work alongside DVA and the ex-service organisations to make that possible. This benefits everyone: the nation retains valuable skills and experience, while veterans maintain a sense of purpose, connection, and better health.
- **Sovereign capability.** We build it. Every capability brought onshore is skilled Australian employment and technical expertise that stays here.

Australian industry has begun putting real capital behind the first of those rather than assuming government will carry it alone, and that deserves acknowledging. Industry, government and the veteran community get further working together than apart. Our own contribution is narrow — one company, one sector — but it points that way, and we intend to keep widening it.