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Marintec Secures Australian Economic Accelerator Innovator Grant for Maritime Innovation

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Marintec, a collaborative venture between Navantia Australia and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), has clinched a \$2 million Australian Economic Accelerator (AEA) Innovator Grant to develop a cutting-edge multi-robot mission control system for autonomous maritime operations. This milestone, part of a \$93 million AEA program, bolsters Australia's defence and blue economy sectors. This

article explores Marintec's achievement, its transformative project, and the broader implications for Australia's innovation landscape.

Announced on July 16, 2025, the grant supports Marintec's 24-month project to revolutionize autonomous teaming in dynamic maritime environments, enhancing Australia's defence capabilities. Ross Yannatos, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Navantia Australia, hailed the collaboration with UTS and the Australian Maritime College (AMC), stating, "This grant marks a significant milestone in advancing autonomous maritime technologies" (Asia Pacific Defence Reporter). The system, designed for Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 5-7, builds on laboratory-validated concepts to create scalable prototypes for real-world naval applications. With two of the 39 AEA-funded projects tied to defence, Marintec's work aligns with national priorities like advanced manufacturing and maritime security.

The AEA, a \$1.6 billion initiative, aims to bridge university research and industry, fostering commercial outcomes in sectors like defence and clean energy. However, critics question the government's selective funding, arguing it prioritizes niche projects while broader defence needs, such as recruitment and equipment upgrades, remain underfunded. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) notes that defence spending, at 2.1% of gross domestic product (GDP), lags behind allied benchmarks, potentially limiting the ADF's readiness. Marintec's grant, while a win, underscores the need for sustained investment to compete globally, especially as China advances its naval autonomy.

Marintec's project promises to strengthen Australia's sovereign capabilities, reducing reliance on foreign technology. Yet, with only \$93 million distributed across 39 projects, the AEA's scale raises concerns about its ability to transform the economy broadly. As Marintec forges

ahead, its success could set a precedent for innovation-driven defence solutions, but only if backed by robust policy and funding. Will this grant propel Australia's maritime future, or remain a drop in the ocean?