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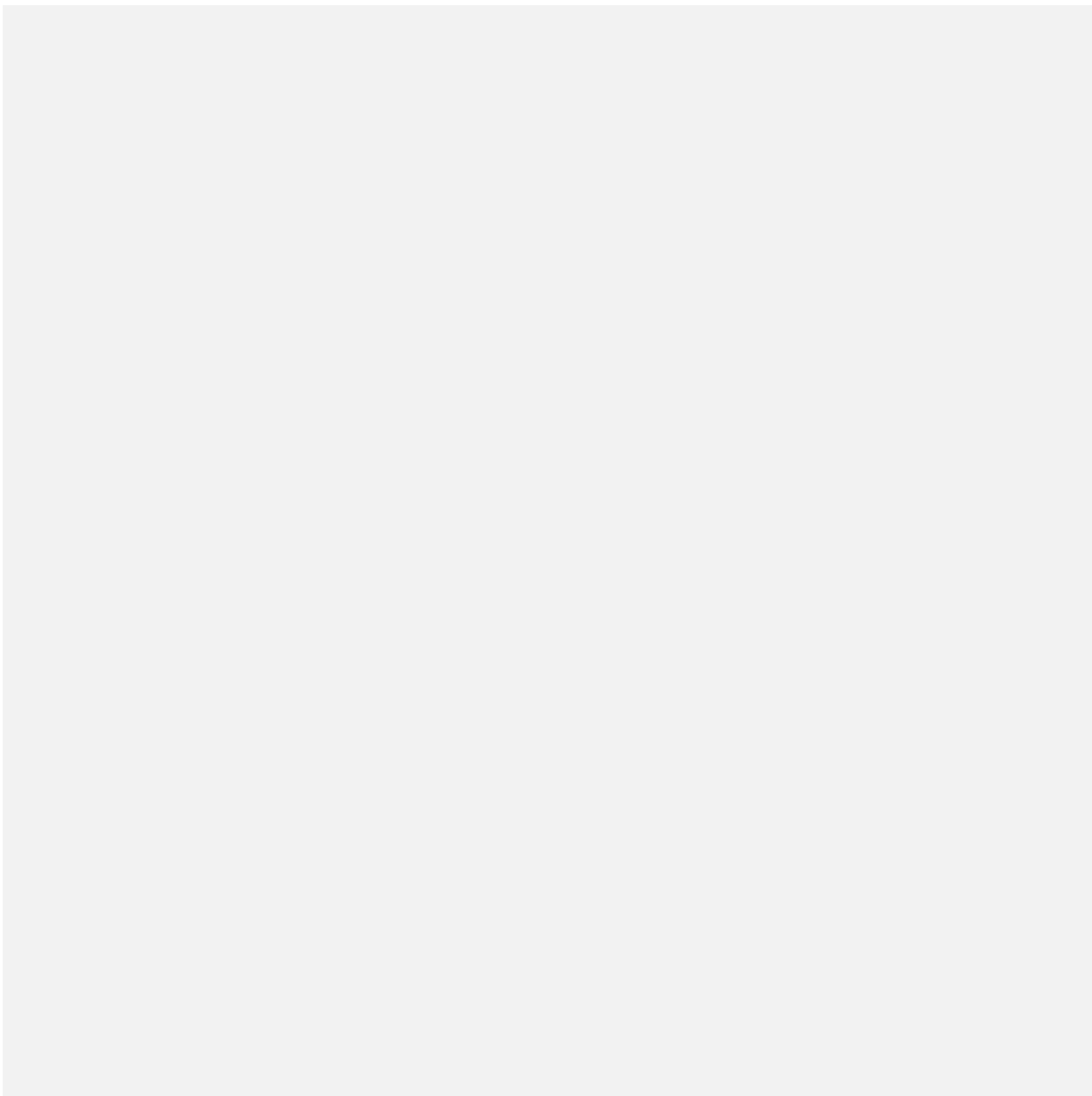
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PhD work experience program boosted by injection of 100 interns to defence science group

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Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne says the 100 defence interns will get valuable work experience. **Max Bree**



by **Tim Dodd**

A commitment to place 100 interns by the federal government's Defence Science and Technology Group has boosted the government towards its election pledge of achieving 1400 PhD industry internships in a four-year period.

The interns will work on defence projects for three to six months, typically towards the end of their PhD where they can either apply their doctoral research directly, or employ the research skills they have learnt in a work environment.

Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne said the interns would get "a valuable opportunity to gain experience in defence while working on programs of national significance".

The program, promised by the Coalition during last year's federal election campaign, intends to place 1400 PhD students with employers in the 2017-2020 period.

It is based on a successful Canadian PhD program which has found that 60 per cent of students doing internships are working in the same business two years later and earn about \$10,000 more than the baseline salary in their field.

On track for target

The \$28 million Australian program is run by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) and its director, Geoff Prince, says the placement of interns will ramp up sharply and is on track to achieve the target.

Although the government pushed the program during last year's election campaign as one which supported more women into science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) careers, it is available to support a wide range of PhD students in internships, mainly in STEM areas but also some in social sciences and the humanities.

Professor Prince said the internships were intended to increase women's participation at a high level in STEM research, but also to boost Indigenous students and students from regional areas.

Students receive a stipend of \$3000 a month during their internship and half of this is reimbursed to the employer from government funding once the internship is completed.



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