



WOMEN IN DEFENCE INDUSTRY case study

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Women in Defence Industry Emerging Leaders Program** was created to accelerate the leadership journey for early career STEM women in the Defence Industry.

Across four experiential workshops during 2025, participants from across the sector achieved clear, measurable change:

- Confidence more than doubled.
- Communication improved by 70%.
- Influence knowledge climbed by 250%, applied influence more than doubled.
- Performance capability increased immediately by 41%, and career decision making confidence rose by 96%.
- Program satisfaction averaged 92%.

The deeper impact was cultural.

Women redefined leadership as impact rather than title, discovered their authentic voice, and learned to influence outcomes without relying on authority. Managers observed women stepping into visibility, leading projects, and modelling resilience – behaviours that strengthen Defence Sector organisations at their core.

“My understanding of leadership has evolved from seeing it as a position of authority to recognising it as a mindset of service, influence, and growth.”

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

Those results were visible in participants' everyday work.

As they practiced new ways of communicating and engaging stakeholders, meetings began to include more concise, evidence-based contributions from technical experts.

As participants understood how to lead authentically, they started to realise that leadership in Defence doesn't have to fit a traditional mould.

The translation of this realisation to the workplace allowed them to start shaping outcomes in new ways and with more confidence.

"My experience with the Emerging Leaders program has been truly transformative... I highly recommend it to anyone looking to grow both personally and professionally."

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



case study WOMEN IN DEFENCE INDUSTRY EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

CLARIFYING THE NEED

Innovation in Defence Industry depends on sustainable access to a highly capable and professionalised STEM workforce, and a breadth of perspective that includes the STEM innovation potential of the entire population.

Accessing the STEM expertise of women is a current challenge for defence industry. The Women in Defence Industry Emerging Leaders Program addresses that imperative at the individual, organisational and industry level, through upskilling the professional and leadership capability & capacity of early-career women across the industry.

Many women in STEM encounter low visibility and uncertainty about how to translate expertise into influence. Early-career women in the Defence sector are ready to contribute and lead, but the industry requires structured interventions to translate capability into influence.

Without targeted programs, the Defence sector risks losing a generation of technically excellent women before they rise into leadership. The program offered a structure where new behaviors could be taught, practiced, observed, and reinforced, so those aspirations turned into observable contributions.

"My experience with the Emerging Leaders program has been truly transformative. It provided me with the tools and insights to refine my leadership skills, foster a growth mindset, and become more confident in making strategic decisions. The program's emphasis on collaboration, real-world challenges, and mentorship has been invaluable, and I walk away with a deeper understanding of what it means to lead effectively in today's dynamic environment. I highly recommend it to anyone looking to grow both personally and professionally."

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Emerging Leaders Program specifically addresses the career barriers that can exist for early-career women in STEM and the Defence Industry, and support these women to reach their potential as experts and create impact as leaders.

The Program is designed upon The Assembly's unique leadership development blueprint tailored for women in Security and STEM, informed by our exclusive research in the Australian Security and STEM sectors, and prioritising foundational leadership learning in the following key areas:

- Understanding self as leader, leadership mindset and motivations
- Navigating barriers for women in Security and STEM environments
- Communication and influence
- Confidence, resilience and maximising individual performance
- Building resource networks and mentoring

"I joined the Emerging Leaders Program to grow as a leader, expand my network, and gain clarity on my career path".

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

The 2-month Emerging Leaders Program was delivered to a cohort of early-career STEM women from across the Defence Industry sector, via four interconnected workshops and supplementary learning activities.

Each workshop combined contemporary leadership research, neuroscience, emotional intelligence, and practical coaching, allowing participants to experience meaningful insights. Participants translated their learning into practical skills back in the workplace through directed experiential learning. The program evaluated outcomes after every workshop, making it possible to track real shifts in learning and capability.

"My goal was to build confidence, sharpen strategic thinking, and lead with greater impact."

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

RESULTS ACHIEVED

Four key development themes were evident in participants: strengthened **confidence**, a significant uplift in **communication** and **influence** capabilities, and newfound skills to **maximise performance**.

“I now focus less on titles and more on the kind of impact I want to make - whether that’s through leading teams, driving change, or mentoring others.”

+ COMMUNICATION & CONFIDENCE

Prior to program participation, many women hesitated to speak up in meetings, unsure whether their contributions would carry weight. Participants gained a **70% improvement in their communication abilities**.

As communication strategies were learned and applied, voices that had once been tentative began to lead discussions. Participants immediately amplified their ability to manage and **build their confidence by more than two-fold**.

The change was not only personal; organisational conversations became more inclusive and better informed. Ideas surfaced earlier, decisions were stress tested more effectively, and team confidence grew.

“I realised I was underestimating my ability to be heard. Now I have strategies to communicate with more authority.”

“The growth mindset, emotional intelligence, and stakeholder mapping tools helped me lead with more clarity, empathy, and strategic focus.”

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

+ INFLUENCE

The most transformative changes came in participants’ ability to influence. **Knowledge of influence strategies increased by 250%, while applied influence more than doubled**.

This growth reframed influence from something bestowed by seniority into a practice that could be cultivated deliberately. Rather than waiting for permission, emerging female leaders began to shape outcomes directly, creating agility in teams and distributing leadership more broadly. This shift turned influence into a practiced capability that enabled teams to act faster.

“I now understand how to influence without formal authority. I feel equipped to make an impact even when I’m not the most senior in the room.”

+ MAXIMISING PERFORMANCE

Sustaining energy and direction in demanding environments is a critical leadership capability and another key development area. The resilience and individual performance capability of participants immediately increased by 40% and confidence in managing one’s own career doubled.

What emerged was a model of intentional leadership, driven not by exhaustion but by clarity of purpose. These changes helped participants stay effective under pressure and build longer term career momentum. The Defence sector benefits when talented women are retained, protected from burnout, and supported to navigate careers with resilience.

“The tools gave me practical ways to reflect, reset, and improve how I work.”

ORGANISATIONAL AND INDUSTRY IMPACT

Evaluation articulates that the program drove both measurable capability shifts and deeper cultural transformation. With program satisfaction averaging 92%, it is clear participants valued not just the content but the transformation it enabled.

+ Confidence and communication capabilities grew, a change that translated into women speaking with greater authority and shaping key discussions.

+ Ability to influence was amplified dramatically, signalling a structural shift from waiting for an invitation to deliberately shaping outcomes.

+ Performance capability lifted by over 40%, while career decision-making confidence doubled, equipping women not only to deliver in demanding environments but also to chart purposeful futures in the Defence sector.

One of the most impactful applications of learning to date has been “*applied emotional intelligence during a cross-functional project to build trust, gain buy-in, and improve collaboration.*”

The ripple effects of the **Emerging Leaders Program** extended far beyond individual development. Managers noted participants volunteering for stretch assignments, representing teams in senior forums, and contributing to high-stakes discussions. The numbers show notable capability lifts and the stories show cultural change. More voices are now shaping decisions, innovation is supported by diverse input, and teams are more resilient.

“I now lead with a stronger growth mindset, actively seek feedback, and focus more on empowering others rather than directing.”

Cultural transformation is becoming tangible not through policy but through lived example. Defence Industry organisations have gained emerging leaders who amplify decision making quality, bring diversity of perspective to innovation, and strengthen resilience across teams.

Yet the truest return lies in what numbers alone cannot capture. Women began to redefine leadership itself, from hierarchy-bound authority to authentic influence, from role-based power to visible impact. Teams are benefitting from sharper decision making, more inclusive debate, and resilient leadership behaviours that are strengthening organisational culture. What is already clear is that in participant organisations, cultural transformation has begun, sparked by visible voices who model new ways of leading.

“One moment [from the program] that really shifted my perspective was hearing from senior female leaders who spoke candidly about their journeys. It made me realise that visibility and representation matter deeply, and that leadership in Defence doesn’t have to fit a traditional mould.”

EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

INVEST IN YOUR FEMALE LEADERS

The Women in Defence Industry Emerging Leaders Program proves that targeted investment in female leaders delivers measurable growth and cultural transformation. By unlocking communication, confidence, influence, and sustainable performance, the Defence sector gains leaders who are technically excellent and capable of shaping outcomes today and into the future.

The future of Defence depends on diverse and inclusive leadership. To learn how you can partner with **The Assembly** to invest in your leaders, visit <https://theassembly.com/services/>