

Former defence minister Christopher Pyne heads on to ASX battlefield

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Former federal defence minister Christopher Pyne is taking up his first board seat on an ASX-listed company, becoming a [director of XTEK](#), a maker of ballistic shields, armour, helmets and drones which is aiming to capitalise on the sharp rise in defence spending by governments around the globe.

The appointment comes on the day his 18-month exclusion - which applies to all federal politicians for doing work in the area in which they had dealings with when in office - officially expires.



Christopher Pyne says ex-politicians are entitled to use their skills and background to make a living in other sectors. **Louie Douvis**

Mr Pyne, who [retired from federal politics in 2019](#) after 26 years, told *The Australian Financial Review* he had been keen to be involved once again in an industry he had deep experience and knowledge of, and XTEK was a forward-looking company.

He said he had followed the rules rigidly on the exclusivity period and was clear to use his contacts to help XTEK expand and to create jobs for Australians, though there would likely be a string of knockers and critics.

"The exclusivity period is 18 months for a reason," Mr Pyne said.

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The worsening geopolitical tensions around the world, and the diplomatic and trade spat with China, meant governments were increasing defence spending and this would only accelerate, he said.

"That is already happening and I don't see any sign that that will change," Mr Pyne said.

XTEK had annual revenues of \$43 million in 2019-2020, up 13 per cent from the previous year.

Mr Pyne said XTEK had made smart strategic decisions including the acquisition of HighCom, a body armour company based in Ohio in the United States.

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— Christopher Pyne

"They've not put all their eggs in the one basket," he said.

The company, which has carbon-fibre composite technology which makes components lighter and stronger than traditional components in the sectors of the industry in which it operates, has a market capitalisation of about \$44 million.

Its shares were up 7 per cent to 61.5¢ on Friday.

XTEK managing director Philippe Odouard said Mr Pyne had valuable contacts and experience which were important in the defence sector.

"We've had a really good connection with him for a while," he said.

Mr Odouard said over the longer term, the defence industry was in a sweet spot for growth because of the tensions that had grown between nations, with countries around the globe diverting more spending into defence.

"Longer term, certainly it reinforces the need to be more self-sufficient," he said.

Lobbying and consulting

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"I intend to use my knowledge and experience to increase business growth, create jobs and make a contribution," he said.

He is likely to consider further board seats on ASX companies should the right ones eventuate.

Mr Pyne was a cabinet minister for six years. After leaving politics he became principal of lobbying and consulting group GC Advisory and is also the chairman of Pyne and Partners. He is also an industry professor in the University of South Australia Business School specialising in defence and space.

<https://www.afr.com/companies/manufacturing/former-defence-minister-christopher-pyne-heads-on-to-asx-battlefield-20201127-p56io9>