



ZenithGroup

Why the Defence & Industry Study Course (DISC) is a Force Multiplier for Australian Industry

Executive summary

The Defence & Industry Study Course (DISC) is more than a leadership program. It's a structured, nation-wide practicum that closes gaps between Defence, primes, SMEs, academia, and government. For industry—especially manufacturing—DISC turns strategy into execution: better bid/no-bid decisions, faster compliance lift, stronger supply-chain resilience, and teams that speak the language of Defence acquisition. Organisations that invest in DISC can see gains in quality assurance, export controls, manufacturing, and sovereign sustainment outcomes.



Industry & Defence, RAAF Base, Richmond NSW



What DISC actually does (in practical terms)

- Connects decision-makers across the ecosystem: participants build a verified network of peers in Defence, primes, and SMEs—people who can unblock problems.
- Demystifies Defence acquisition: participants learn how capability is prioritised, funded and sustained— aids industry proposals to align with needs and timing.
- Translates strategy into operations: site visits, panels and case exercises bring DSR23/Integrated Investment Program priorities to life.
- Raises the bar on governance and assurance: exposure to security, export controls, ethical procurement, risk, and safety frameworks sharpens “first-time-right” delivery.



Immersion with Navy platforms and sustainment realities – HMAS Coonawarra, Darwin NT.



On the bridge: shared vocabulary and mission context.



Seven enterprise-level benefits for industry

Sharper customer alignment (wins up, friction down)

DISC alumni understand how Defence defines value: readiness, availability, survivability, interoperability and “speed to capability.” That insight improves product-market fit in bids, shortens clarification cycles, and reduces rework in contracting.

Stronger supply-chain resilience

Participants learn best practices in dual-sourcing, critical-item classification, vendor assurance and obsolescence management. The result: fewer single-point failures, better surge capacity, and faster recovery from disruptions.

Faster compliance uplift

DISC helps industry teams prioritise the right accreditations and controls—quality (e.g., ISO 9001/AS 9100), environment (ISO 14001), safety (ISO 45001), cyber (Essential Eight maturity), security (DISP), and export controls (ITAR/EAR/DSGL)—and stage them sensibly to match program gates.

Reduced delivery risk (schedule and quality)

With a deeper grasp of Defence acceptance criteria, alumni implement practical tools—FAI/PPAP, configuration control, process capability (CP/CPK), and disciplined change management—so parts arrive conforming and on time.

Better workforce retention and leadership bench

DISC is a career accelerant. Alumni come back engaged, connected, and credible with Defence stakeholders, which raises retention and succession strength in technical and commercial streams.

Improved cost discipline

Understanding whole-of-life sustainment and availability targets means designs and processes are optimised earlier. That reduces through-life cost, not just unit price—exactly how Defence evaluates value.

Sovereign sustainment pathways

DISC reinforces why sovereign capability matters and where Australian suppliers can (and should) play. That shapes smarter make-in-Australia or make-with-Australia plans that stand up in negotiations.



Cohort connections: lasting relationships.

Why DISC is uniquely valuable for manufacturing

- **Quality and special processes:** Alumni better integrate NDT, welding to AS 1554 categories (or aerospace equivalents), heat treatment, coatings, and traceability into production gates—reducing NCRs and escapes.
- **Configuration management & design control:** Tighter CM prevents drawing/version drift and protects airworthiness/safety cases.
- **Industrialisation discipline:** DFM/A and PFMEA arrive earlier; takt time and OEE improve; bottlenecks are identified before LRIP/FRP.
- **Cyber & data integrity:** Understanding Defence expectations drives practical controls for controlled technical data and manufacturing networks.
- **Export control hygiene:** Clean part classification, licence logic, and build-to-print governance protect schedule and reputation.
- **Sustainment-ready build:** Spares, repairables, and test equipment are planned up front; reliability growth and obsolescence plans are baked in.



What your people bring back on day one

- A Defence-literate network (people who pick up the phone).
- A shared vocabulary with customers: readiness, availability, ILS, certification, sovereign sustainment.
- A prioritised improvement backlog: which controls to implement first, where yield is bleeding, how to stage DISP/cyber/QA lifts.
- Realistic opportunity targeting: fewer speculative bids, more qualified pursuits aligned to program tempo.



Industry site engagement: unique experiences.

Measurable outcomes you can target

- Bid conversion increase on qualified pursuits within 12–18 months.
- Quality: increased knowledge on customer requirement from DISC-led experience.
- Through-life support: new baseline understanding via unique learnings.
- Risk posture: demonstrable maturity lifts (e.g., Cyber Security, DISP onboarding).



How to maximise ROI from DISC

- Nominate the right participants: a technical leader or a commercial chief.
- Set a 90-day implementation plan with several enterprise priorities, executed with executive sponsorship.
- Create internal “transfer of learning” moments: updating your team on Defence controls.



In the field experiences: translating knowledge into strategy

- Link to performance metrics: tie DISC outcomes to KPIs (OTD, bid conversion, yield, etc.)
- Leverage the alumni network: invite alumni to supplier days and readiness reviews.

Common myths—debunked

“DISC is just policy talk.”

It’s an applied course with site visits, panels, and problem scenarios that translate directly into daily work.

“It’s only for primes.”

SMEs and mid-tier manufacturers benefit enormously—often more—because the network and literacy leapfrog years of trial-and-error.

“We’re too busy.”

If you’re chasing Defence work, this is the work. A single avoided re-bid or major NCR can fund participation many times over.



A short, generic case vignette (composite)

A mid-sized fabricator sent a General Manager to DISC. They returned with new local and wide area contacts, bid for new projects and within six months, secured cutting edge (new) ongoing work.

Where to start (simple playbook)

- Select your candidates carefully, needs to be a high-level achiever with multi-disciplinary skills e.g. manufacturing, QA, engineering, programs/BD.
- Baseline today's metrics (OTD, NCRs, yield, bid conversion, maturity levels).
- Nominate for the next DISC intake.
- Lock in a plan with executive sponsorship and resources.
- Report outcomes and share wins across your supply network.

Final word

For industry, DISC isn't a credential—it's a capability multiplier. Manufacturers that invest in their leaders through DISC build the relationships, literacy and discipline that Defence buyers can trust. In a world where speed to credible capability is the competitive edge, DISC alumni help you deliver it—safely, securely, and sustainably.



DISC learning: Unparalleled capability multiplier.