

# GROUP CONCEPT PAPER

## SADILP: BEYOND GRADUATION

Has SADILP achieved its objectives for participants and Defence Industry, and how can it be improved?

SADILP

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## WHY IS THIS TOPIC IMPORTANT?

To the best of our knowledge, aside from the course evaluation forms which are completed at the end of each session, no formal evaluation has been done to confirm that SADILP is achieving the objectives of participants and industry.

We believe this of great importance for a course which is so unique and held in such high regard, and generally it is important to measure/evaluate a course of this nature to ensure it is continuing to achieve its goals.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a group, we believe this course is achieving its objectives for both its participants and Defence Industry, and feel some minor improvements can be made.

This paper will outline our findings.



SADILP

## OUR PROCESS

Before beginning our research, we believed the course was certainly delivering on its objectives, based purely on the continued willingness of past contributors (and Alumni) to contribute to the Program, and the number of applications in 2018.

To confirm or challenge that thinking, and gain a greater understanding of how successfully SADILP met the objectives of participants, we needed some feedback from past participants.

We also felt the need to seek feedback from managers and/or employers that sponsor candidates, to understand if they were seeing the requisite change in their nominees.

In addition, we wanted to give some consideration to whether or not SADILP is indeed the right vehicle for the SA Defence industry, and was there any evidence that the program was benefiting the industry, and not just the individuals doing the course.

Our first thought to obtain a large coverage of past candidates was to distribute an online survey to all alumni. Despite the logistical challenges, and the potential of limited responses, we felt that by formulating some standard questions and mass-distributing those to all past participants, we would be able to get some standardised results back that we could use to analyse a broad cross-section of Alumni.

Whilst formulating a list of questions, we acknowledged that the program may have been modified somewhat since its inception, to the extent that some responses from the earliest years may no longer be relevant.

In an attempt to counter this, we also sought to interview a select range of people face-to-face, to allow us to gain greater understanding of the Program's reason for being, plus seek clarification or delve deeper into some survey responses.

This list of targeted interviewees included former DTC CEO, Chris Burns, in order to understand more about SADILP's origins. In addition, we felt the opinion of current DTC CEO, Margot Forster, was vital to understand the objectives of the current program, and expand on the information about the program from the DTC website. We also felt that speaking to the past and present CEO would help us to understand whether the objectives of the program have changed over time.

In addition, we sought the opinion of some key SADILP alumni, as well as some prominent sponsors.

Finally, we also gave consideration to what could be done to improve the course.

## ORIGINS AND OBJECTIVES OF SADILP

***“Defence Teaming Centre member companies identified a clear need to have a process that would assist them in overcoming barriers to contracting within Defence and broader sectors. SADILP equips emerging leaders with the necessary skills in communication and negotiation to do so.”***

**DTC Website – June 2018 (pre-website update)**

SADILP’s origins stem from 2009’s Defence Industry Workforce Action Plan (DIWAP).

At that time, the SA Defence Industry had embarked on a significant growth phase (ASC AWDs in build phase, etc). Whilst the introduction of new participants into the Defence Industry with unique technical knowledge presented many opportunities, these new entrants lacked an understanding of the Industry’s nuances and ways of working. Furthermore, a roundtable discussion convened by DTC and attended by several key Executives of major SA Defence companies identified that their major concern when pursuing, winning and executing future work was a lack of leadership succession planning. These executives agreed with DTC’s proposal to run a leadership course for emerging Defence Industry leaders.

DIWAP also highlighted a desire to increase diversity within the workforce, namely through increased participation and opportunities for women in defence industry, and a desire to strengthen leadership skills and foster high-performing work practices.

In discussions with Margot Forster, we also learnt SADILP intends for its candidates to gain a better understanding of themselves, in order to identify their preferred leadership style, and learn to adapt or tailor their leadership style to changing circumstances. This was reiterated by former DTC Deputy CEO, Kerry Smith.

Furthermore, Ms Forster highlighted the networking aspect of the Program presented collaboration opportunities within the Industry, and would increase candidates’ understanding of the broader issues facing Defence and Defence Industry.

Regarding networking, former CEO Chris Burns highlighted that pre-SADILP, limited networking opportunities existed for people below owner or executive level within the Defence Industry, as DTC events appeared to attract only the upper tiers of Defence businesses. It was hoped at that time that SADILP would provide further development and collaboration opportunities within the lower tiers of Prime Contractors and major subcontractors, and owner/managers of SMEs with Defence interests.

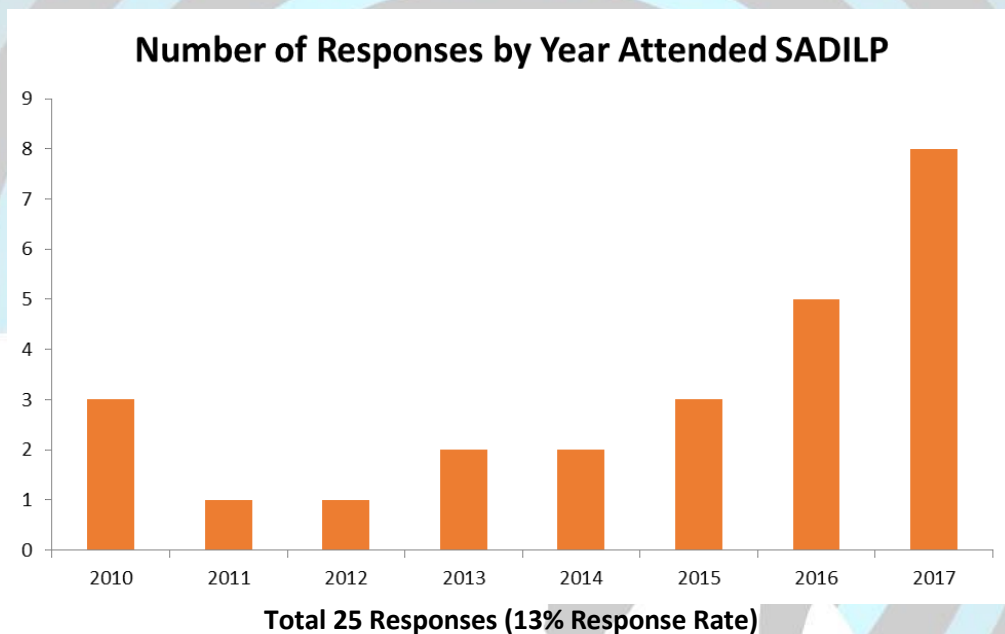
Whilst providing obvious learning and leadership outcomes for participants, it was felt that this would also have positive outcomes for the SA Defence Industry as a whole, by raising the overall leadership standard across a broad range of companies.

## IS SADILP ACHIEVING PARTICIPANTS' OBJECTIVES? ALUMNI SURVEY RESULTS

We issued a survey to SADILP alumni to gather data to answer the questions posed by our topic. As a result of the results and feedback from our presentation, we issued a second survey to a small group of alumni who had indicated a willingness to respond to further questions if required to probe deeper in some areas – results of this smaller survey will be noted where applicable.

### Alumni Cohort

In order to provide context to the results, our first question asked for the participants' intake year. The chart below shows that the majority of responses came from the most recent alumni years. Overall, we anticipated a greater overall response rate, but were advised anecdotally and from DTC personnel that a response rate over 10% was positive. On enquiring with some members, it is possible the survey email may have been identified as spam and filtered out by recipients' email servers, so it is likely our survey missed some alumni.



### Alumni Objectives

In order to answer whether SADILP is achieving participants' objectives, we wanted to understand people's motivations for nominating. To do so, we enquired as to candidates' motivation for applying, as an open-ended question (rather than multiple choice), and a number of key themes emerged:

- 60%** - to develop Leadership skills/professional development
- 32%** - to improve their professional network in the Defence Industry
- 32%** - to improve their understanding of Defence and Defence Industry
- 20%** - recommendation from/nomination by a manager
- 8%** - attracted by the accreditation only

We also wanted to identify what alternatives candidates considered for further study, and what lead them to choose SADILP.

Of those who responded, 28% considered the following alternatives:

- 16% DISC
- 4% MBA
- 4% TAFE
- 4% AIM
- 4% Mentoring

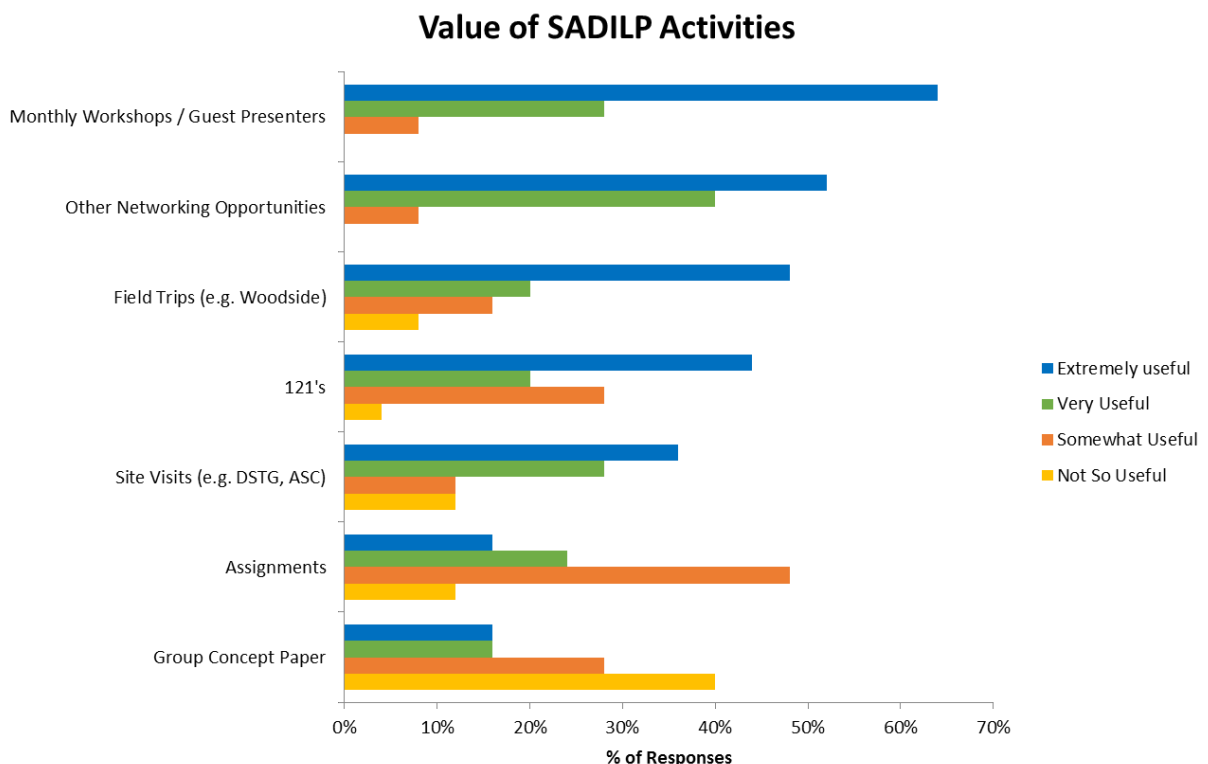
Candidates reported that they selected SADILP for one or more of the following reasons:

- Local / SA focus
- Leadership focus
- Excellent reputation
- Defence-based content
- Reduced time commitment v MBA/DISC

This highlights that SADILP fills a unique space in development offerings for professionals in the SA Defence Industry. This theme also came through in interviews with some alumni, sponsors and DTC leaders past and present, with all saying that SADILP filled a niche, sometimes acting as a springboard for further learning, in particular the Defence Industry Study Course, or an Industry Leaders' Fund grant for further study (Harvard Owner Managers' Program, INSEAD etc). Several survey respondents commented that SADILP gave them the confidence to pursue further study.

### Value of SADILP Activities

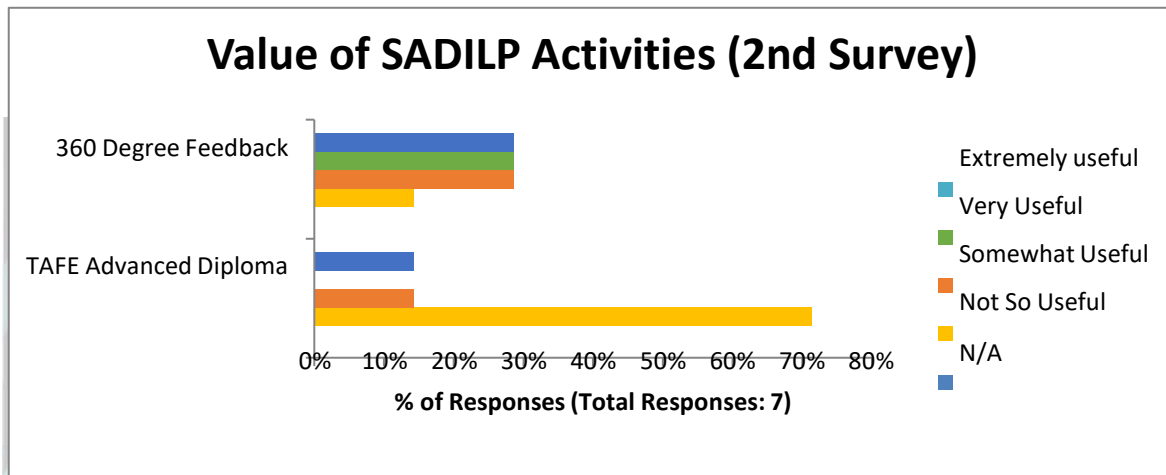
We next looked at the value former candidates placed on key aspects of the program, and their responses appeared to align with their motivations for nominating:



An important thing to note was that whilst Assignments and Group Concept Papers were deemed by candidates to provide the least value, we feel this is simply as these were the more challenging parts of the course. The assignments provided an important means of providing accreditation, and the

process of working in a team and presenting to a panel, whilst not necessarily enjoyable, serve as good leadership practice, as effective presentation is vital for effective leadership and in gaining the trust of a team.

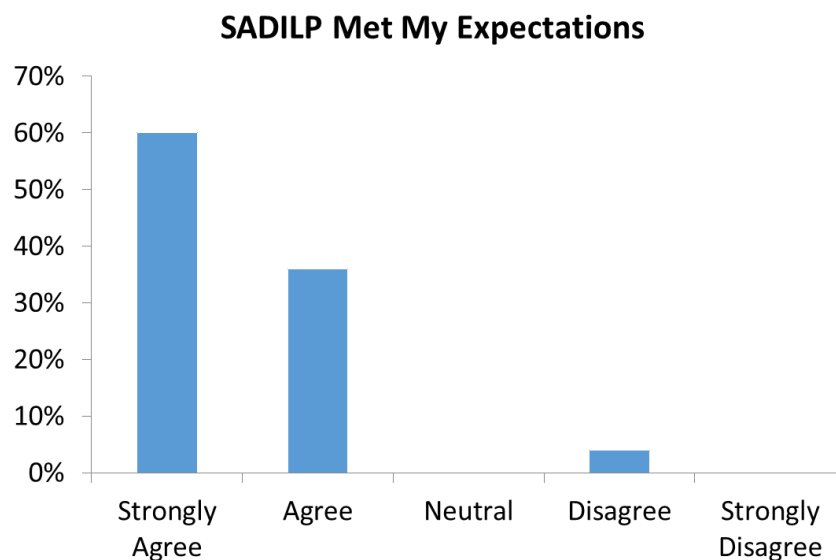
In the follow-up survey, we asked about the value of the 360 degree feedback and TAFE Accreditation activities.



Whilst the Accreditation wasn't highly valued by this small sample of respondents, importantly Kerry Smith (former DTC Deputy CEO and SADILP co-founder) stated that the accreditation was required by the SA Government in order to partly fund SADILP. Ms Smith also reported that TAFE SA has only been involved in the last 5 years, given the time to find a Registered Training Organisation that "got" what SADILP was about. Those re-surveyed were before and after TAFE's involvement, so we do not believe this feedback is due to TAFE's selection as the RTO.

#### Overall Satisfaction & Benefits

We next asked whether the course met participants' expectations, receiving a resounding yes:



We investigated the isolated negative response further, only to find that this participant already had extensive SA Defence Industry and leadership experience, along with several higher qualifications, and as such SADILP was surplus to their needs. Further follow-up after our presentation uncovered another more disgruntled candidate, again due to extensive prior qualifications.

The survey also examined alumni progression post-SADILP, and found the following:

**44%** achieved a Promotion

**56%** gained Increased Responsibility

**60%** moved to a New Role

**96%** said SADILP had helped them expand their network

**80%** had used the SADILP alumni network in their work

**100%** had recommended SADILP to other candidates

**100%** are still in the Defence Industry

Interestingly, even the candidate who didn't feel that SADILP met their expectations recommended the course to others.

In the follow-up survey, we enquired whether alumni had used their network since SADILP, and if so, how. Responses varied from investigating commercial opportunities, business advice, general guidance, collaboration opportunities and job seeking, to simply seeing familiar faces at Defence Industry events.

Whilst 100% of respondents stated they are still in the Defence Industry, we acknowledge there may be some skewing of results, as alumni no longer in the Defence Industry may have opted not to complete the survey, or not received it.

We next focused on benefits of SADILP for alumni. Aside from obvious increased knowledge of Defence and Defence Industry, we extracted some key comments:

- *Confidence*
- *Courage*
- *Career Direction*
- *Motivation*
- *Life-long friendships*
- *Personal growth*
- *Strong networks*

Alumni John Salerno (MD – Dedicated Systems), having initially undertaken the course to fill a late vacancy caused by an employee, considered SADILP a transformative experience, and has since sponsored further employees and recommended the course to peers. In addition, some members of his Board are SADILP alumni from his intake year.

And, the most powerful response, which has been reiterated by other alumni in face-to-face conversations...

***"...it ended up being a life changing experience"***

We believe the above responses comprehensively illustrate SADILP is meeting (if not exceeding) participants' objectives.



## IS SADILP ACHIEVING INDUSTRY'S OBJECTIVES?

As part of our discussions with current and former DTC leaders, we also looked at the objectives of industry.

SADILP's origins stem from several key Defence Industry objectives. A key objective was to raise the overall leadership standard within the Defence Industry, and provide an incubator of sorts for future collaboration.

We also referred earlier to a lack of networking within management levels in the Defence Industry, as Defence Industry events largely consisted of CEOs or Business Development Executives. An added intention of SADILP was to provide greater networking and collaboration potential between industry segments (Prime Contractors, Large Sub-Contractors and SMEs).

Noting our survey sample consisted of SADILP alumni who have since sponsored candidates, we asked the direct question as to whether SADILP was achieving its objectives for the Defence Industry, and received a 100% positive response rate, suggesting SADILP is indeed meeting the objectives of Defence Industry among those surveyed.

Within one of the open text questions of our survey, we received responses which largely followed the below themes:

- Increases knowledge of the Defence Industry
- Improves understanding of Defence
- Builds future leaders
- Improves leadership skills
- Builds networks within Industry

As a candidate sponsor, Sheryl Lutz (GM (Maritime) - SAAB) suggested the comparatively fewer contact hours worked in industry's favour, particularly given consideration to candidates' personal growth, and the greater understanding candidates developed of the Defence Industry.

Furthermore, when interviewed, alumni Kellie Hussey (formerly of BAE Systems, now Contracts Manager at SAAB) believed this course was more critical than ever, given the next wave of Defence-related work about to commence in Australia.

## HOW CAN SADILP BE IMPROVED?

In our survey, the majority of responses suggested no improvements, or specifically stated no improvements were required.

Regarding Concept Papers, a common theme suggested narrowing the breadth of the topics offered, and reducing group sizes. This appeared to take place this year, suggesting the DTC and course coordinators are monitoring some form of feedback.

There were some isolated contrasting survey responses (too short / too long, etc), which may indeed suggest the course content is sufficient.

As a group we considered some improvements, and found many were continuations of changes already beginning to take place.

The first improvement we considered was to continue improving candidate diversity. This year represented one of the best in terms of female candidates (with 9 female candidates out of 25), however we noted it was important to consider racial diversity, and continue to secure candidates from diverse employers. It was felt that this year the course suffered slightly by not having any candidates with Defence Force service, and it was agreed that this would provide additional diversity of thought.

To continue accommodating gender diversity, it was felt further consideration could be given to course logistics, such as avoiding school holidays for sessions, and in some cases more suitable amenities (it was noted that 16ALR Woodside's gymnasium amenities were insufficient for the number of female attendees).

We also believe more could be done to measure SADILP's success. One suggestion was conducting 360° feedback 12 months after completion of the course, to determine whether candidates' peer replies had changed due to SADILP. Potentially, a survey similar to what our group prepared could be sent to alumni going forward, but with further efforts to ensure alumni contact details are correct, and a more impassioned plea to alumni for feedback, as results could generate greater improvements.

Given the favourable response to holding a course session at Codan as part of the 2018 course (incorporating a site tour), we believe this should continue or increase in future years. This in turn may allow for greater diversity of field visits, to perhaps include visits to other prominent SA-owned businesses (e.g. Redarc, SAGE).

Other considerations included a Course Handbook, or copies of session slides provided at the start of each session. However, this was considered difficult in some instances, given the Chatham House nature of the course, and sensitivity of some topics and speakers.

Another idea was the creation of a LinkedIn group to cover all alumni, as it was in some cases difficult to identify a wide cross-section of candidates to interview. A LinkedIn search only uncovered 44 people with profiles mentioning SADILP, with several of those from this year.

## GORDON EDWARDS

From our perspective, and as told by many we interviewed and surveyed, Gordon Edwards is felt to be integral to SADILP. Whilst the course (and Gordon) are not perfect by his own admission, the course evolves and changes with Gordon's own personal growth, and through advice and feedback received. Gordon's participation in Program activities such as the Exercise Executive Stretch also aids in building rapport and driving further engagement amongst candidates.

Gordon was instilled as SADILP's facilitator before the course began. Kerryn Smith explained that she and Gordon worked together on the DTC's SADILP submission to the State Government, and he has since facilitated all nine SADILP courses.

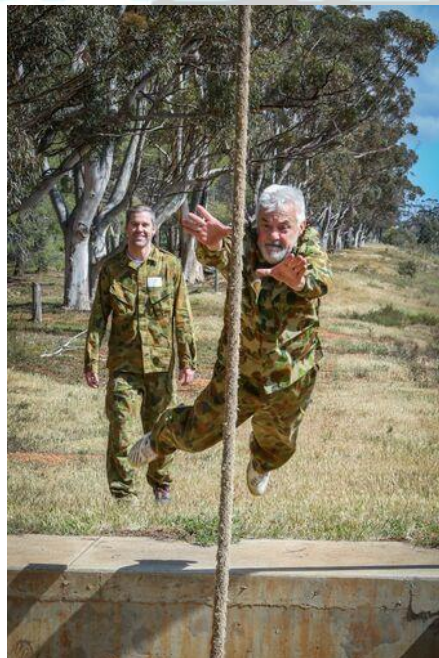
Gordon's unique talent in reading and coaching people, guiding group discussion, quietening the extroverts, coaxing the introverts, and challenging people to be their best make him an indispensable element of the program. SADILP would not be SADILP without Gordon's involvement.

The following is a sample of survey comments:

*"I was hugely challenged, more than I thought I was ready for, but Gordon is a fabulous judge of just how far to push you."*

*"Gordon's insight is second to none, and the manner in which the program challenged me was invaluable"*

*"Gordon is an incredible facilitator and interviewer - humble yet forceful enough when needed to snap you back into shape.... His ability to sit and listen and somehow enable you to work out your own answers is a skill I hope to master."*



## CONCLUSION

Given the overwhelmingly positive survey responses and interview feedback, we believe SADILP is indeed meeting the objectives of participants and industry.

SADILP is a highly successful, unique course which is the envy of other States (and industries). As evidenced by the number of 2018 applications, the course is also very much in demand, and with unprecedented Defence-related spending about to take place in Australia, this course is considered vital to continue developing the next generation of leaders.

Whilst we identified some minor improvements, we believe the DTC and Gordon Edwards should be commended for being the founders and custodians of a course held in such high regard, and very much recommend it continue.

