

DEFENCE AND INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe speaks to Colonel **Andrew Gallaway**, Chief Petty Officer **Ray Rosendale**, and Group Captain **Lisa Jackson Pulver** about how the Australian Defence Force is engaging with Indigenous Australians.

Going Native: The Army's Strategy to Engage Indigenous Australians

As the first equal opportunity employer of Indigenous Australians, the Australian Army, as an institution, has played a long-standing lead role in accommodating and integrating Indigenous Australians into the ADF. In line with the NAIDOC week 2014 focus of ADF Indigenous service, defence analyst **Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe** conducted an exclusive interview with **Colonel Andrew Gallaway**, the Army's Director of Workforce Strategy, on how the force is engaging with Indigenous Australians.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe is a security analyst, defence writer, consultant and a Perth-based non-resident Fellow affiliated with the National Security Institute, University of Canberra.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Can you provide a background of the Army's policy of engagement with Aboriginal communities, how and why did it commence, and how it has developed since.

Andrew Gallaway: There has been a history of Indigenous involvement in the Australian Army, but of course that's been on an individual basis—it certainly hasn't been policy driven. We're aware that some Indigenous soldiers have served in the Army since the Boer War. There

have been a couple of famous and iconic Indigenous soldiers like Reg Saunders, but again, they are extraordinary individuals, rather than the Army making a deliberate effort to recruit Indigenous people. We've had an Indigenous strategy since 2008, and it gets refreshed every couple of years; indeed, we are in the process of refreshing it again. The first goal is to improve active participation rates. The second is to improve the Army's capability. The third is to contribute to the development of Indigenous communities. The fourth is for us to be more culturally aware. The fifth is to enhance the Army's reputation as an employer of choice.[‡]

Why do we have the Indigenous strategy that we've got? There are two reasons that I can see. The first is that it is important to acknowledge that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), through the federal government, has 'Closing the Gap' strategies, and that national policy has set a target of 2.7% Indigenous representation across government. Clearly, we are well below that target; therefore, we have a problem that we need to solve. That's the first reason. The second reason, which I think resonates better with people within the Army, is that having this Indigenous strategy sits better with our overall diversity and

[‡] Since this interview was conducted, the latest version of the Army Indigenous Strategy has been endorsed by the Army's senior leadership and issued with effect on 16 June 2014.

inclusion strategy. In the past, there were obstacles preventing Indigenous Australians from either promotion, or speaking their mind, or being accepted for who they are. We want to create a more inclusive employment environment that is more representative of the Australian population. We want to create an environment where regardless of your background, you can achieve whatever you want to achieve without any of the obstacles that may have been present in the past. The end result of all that work is a more capable Army because we can draw from a wider pool of talent.

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Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: In the areas of diversity and capability, tell us what benefits you think Indigenous people have brought to the Army.

Andrew Gallaway: For a person from the eastern seaboard of Australia to get posted into a Regional Force Surveillance Unit (RFSU) and work in that environment is the value of being exposed to multicultural issues in that setting. When that soldier from the eastern seaboard leaves that RFSU, it's something they can apply to the rest of their work in the Regular Army, here or overseas. The ability to understand a different culture, and in this case a culture within Australia, is of enormous value. As for practical capability, I've observed the North-West Mobile Force (NORFORCE) in the Kimberly region, and I can tell you that Indigenous trackers are vital. There are some non-Indigenous people who can provide the same level of knowledge of terrain and education, but they would run a very poor second to the Indigenous people, who are actually born and raised there. Patrols rely extremely heavily on that knowledge, so I would say from the RFSU capacity, that's a unique capability that Indigenous people bring. It would be difficult to undervalue what they bring to the RFSU. As I have said, NORFORCE and the other RSFs [Pilbara Regiment and Far North

Queensland Regiment] both have very strong views about the value of their Indigenous members.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: What is the Indigenous composition of the Australian Army today?

Andrew Gallaway: We have an overall percentage of 1.7%, with 1.3% in the Regular Army and 2.6% in the Army Reserve. That's more than 740 across both categories of service. We measure that in two ways because we essentially have two parts to the Army: the Regular Army and the Army Reserve. There are a slightly higher proportion of Indigenous soldiers in the Army Reserve than in the Regular Army. For the full-time Regular Army, at the moment we have 21 Indigenous personnel training at the Army Recruit Training Centre, Kapooka, NSW. In addition, at present 0.4% of regular officers are Indigenous. We've got two lieutenants, eight captains, four majors, three lieutenant colonels, and five officer cadets, so we're looking at more than 20 Indigenous officers.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: What is the percentage of Indigenous composition of the Other Ranks and the Officer Corps in both the Regular Army and Army Reserve? Can you also provide a similar breakdown of Indigenous representation by rank and gender?

Andrew Gallaway: In the Regular Army, the Indigenous Other Rank composition is 1.5%, while the Army Reserve has 3.3% representation. The breakdown of Indigenous representation by rank and gender is as follows: 1.7% of the Regular Army is composed of female Indigenous personnel, the Army Reserve has 3.5% representation. With regard to male Indigenous personnel, the Regular Army has 1.5% representation, while in the Army Reserve the figure is 3.3% of the total force composition.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Why is there such a difference in Indigenous representation in the general Reserve units and the RFSUs? How is this disparity between the RFSUs and the regular reserve component being addressed?

Andrew Gallaway: I take a strategic perspective on it because that's my only experience having

dealt with some of the Closing the Gap policies last year in my previous appointment. I look at the macro level and at what the Army is trying to achieve with the resources it has, and where we are currently at. For the Army to successfully improve participation rates, it would look to the concentrations of Indigenous people in more urban areas, and now I'm talking about the kin on the eastern seaboard, upon improving participation rates to the Regular Army and applying resources. We could achieve a high success rate in a short period of time by focusing on that demographic. For those living in more remote areas, it will be a longer journey, just like it is with Closing the Gap. Enabling people in the more remote areas to reach the health and education standards that we're looking for service in the Regular Army will be difficult. There is a distinction between the standard of health and education background of the Indigenous people who serve in an RFSU, which is lower compared to those in the Regular Army, where the health and education standards are higher. Let's take Western Australia as an example. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures, there's an untapped labour market there for us. The Pilbara Regiment is a challenge, and even the Commanding Officer there will admit they're probably fighting a losing battle competing with what the mining industry employment offers. But within Perth, Bunbury, Geraldton, etc. there probably are a lot of Indigenous people who are inside our target demographic to recruit. What we have done is we are relying on the tri-service asset that's over there in terms of Indigenous recruiting, which is a Navy Petty Officer. However, we also recently put a Reservist over there, doing Indigenous and Army recruitment. He is actually an active member of our Army Indigenous Steering Committee. I hope to see that we'll get an improved result out of the Perth recruiting centre. But it's certainly an area that we've highlighted—it's subject to different constraints than, say, the eastern seaboard. Our full-time element in Western Australia, which is the SAS, is not tapped into the local population for a very good operational reason, and it's not something that we want to alter. We don't necessarily want that element of

our forces doing community engagement because it detracts from their operational focus.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: What are the Army's retention rates of Indigenous Australians over the last five years?

Andrew Gallaway: Over the last five years, the average inflow has been 51 Indigenous people per year, and the outflow (that is, the discharges or transfers from the Regular Army—note that those are generally transfers to categories of both active and inactive Reserve service) has been an average of 35 per year. It should also be noted that we have observed a steady number of existing service personnel electing to identify their Indigenous heritage; however, there are data constraints on being able to measure the self-identification growth effectively and accurately.

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Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Are the Army's Indigenous recruitment and retention statistics higher or lower than the non-Indigenous average?

Andrew Gallaway: The Indigenous separation rate in broad terms is equivalent to that of the non-Indigenous separation rate. That's good news because that tells us that retention isn't a problem. Once we've got them on board, they're leaving for the same reasons and at the same rate as non-Indigenous people. That helps us focus clearly on the recruiting aspect. If I were to give you the last 6 to 12 months of separation rates, it would look very different because the Indigenous population in the Army workforce is so small that various factors can have a disproportionate effect on that number. For instance, four years ago we went through an expansion phase in the Army and recruited a lot of people. As a result, we picked up quite a decent number of Indigenous people, who largely went into the transport and infantry units. They've since reached the initial minimum period of service, which is where we normally see a spike in separation, so naturally we saw a

spike in separation for Indigenous people. That's now starting to level out. We're currently working through a lot of things, and we're just a bit reluctant to speculate on what the future might look like because we don't actually know at this point. We're at the beginning of a really long journey there. Since we've just expressed that this is something that the Army needs to do, we're still reaching out to the community. We've certainly put more emphasis on developing those plans at the local level in recent months. We've just got our heads around how broad and diverse the Indigenous population is, so I think that's the beginning of the journey. I couldn't tell you specifically what we do differently in each niche to reflect the knowledge that we're just starting to accumulate.

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Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Describe the specific Army programs in relation to pre-recruitment and recruitment, and engagement with Indigenous communities nationwide.

Andrew Gallaway: The Department of Defence (DoD) runs a number of tri-service pre-enlisted programs, including the Indigenous Pre-Recruitment Course, the Defence Indigenous Development Program (DIDP), and the Indigenous Students Study Tour. In the Pre-Recruitment Course and the DIDP, we've got leadership and character development, and we talk about ADF culture and values. There's a lot of physical training, language literacy, and numeracy elements to them. They're all designed for different purposes for different candidates and stages of development, where we apply the Closing the Gap criteria. We have taken the approach in the Army of supporting the tri-service effort. That's not because we have ruled out developing programs within the Army. The Army has given Defence Force recruitment eight Indigenous recruiting officers—indeed, to mentor and support Indigenous candidates through the recruiting process and to better engage Indigenous

communities to increase the pool of candidates who would consider a career in the Army. We're looking at establishing relationships to improve that recruiting outcome.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Which states tend to provide the most recruits and why?

Andrew Gallaway: The 'why' might be difficult, and it tends to go up and down. Statistically, looking at the last four years of achievement, Cairns has always been in the top four. Interestingly, Hobart is also a major contender. 'Why?' I couldn't tell you. We don't really know. We are waiting on a study into Defence Force recruiting as to why the numbers of Indigenous people who drop out of the recruiting are quite low, so that might explain our successes or levels. At this stage, we're just going off the numbers. We're still doing more qualitative research.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Let's get into the diversity of the Indigenous community within the Army. For example, would you have a sense of how many different nations and dialects are represented in the Army?

Andrew Gallaway: No. However, now might be a good time to talk about identification and how people self-identify. The declaration of identity in terms of your Indigenous place is completely voluntary. In fact, it's voluntary regardless of your background in terms of ethnicity. Even in identifying your ethnicity or your background, there is a level of detail that sometimes we can't even go into. For instance, 80% of people in the Army choose not to give any specific background. One relatable recent circumstance I dealt with was with the Vietnamese community of Australia. I asked the question before I went to talk to them in Victoria: 'How many people of Vietnamese origin have we got in the Army?' I got an incomplete answer. The reason for that is we can only identify those people who were born in Vietnam, emigrated to Australia, and are now in the Army. We can't identify those people who are of Vietnamese origin whose parents and grandparents are Vietnamese and were born in Australia, because when you identify, it's voluntary in our database—you do it on a regional context.

On the Indigenous side, Defence has made some changes recently that will enable people to identify as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Previously, you could only identify in the broad label, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), and we didn't want to do that for very obvious reasons. But even then, the numbers we have are based on the people who have voluntarily offered their identity, and who are identified as in one of those categories. There are people serving who do not want their identity to be listed in terms of data collection tools. So there is the option to identify and they can remove that identity at various times. I think the issue of identity that struck home to me is when you talk to people from different ethnic backgrounds, a lot of people want to identify as 'Australians'—particularly those who joined the Army: they're Australian. That's their identity. They're soldiers: that's their identity. The question of identity is a very interesting and important area to explore in any kind of anthropological study of the Army.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: From an Army perspective, what are the intricacies of engaging with Aborigines as opposed to Torres Strait Islanders?

Andrew Gallaway: I wouldn't say that we treat Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders differently. I'd say that we have to consider other factors influencing the Aboriginal community, so you'd have to consider the differences between Aborigines in the north of Australia to those in the south, because that very reasonably opens up the diversity of different regions. We're well aware that there are around 200 nations, languages, cultures—and they're quite diverse people across the board. The Torres Strait Islanders in the Top End and our regional forces are quite expert in dealing with different communities. For example, what occurs in the Far North Queensland Regiment would be very different to what occurs in NORFORCE. We are now trying to expand that learning through our formation of liaison officer networks. So while we keep our goals at the national level, at the local level we have liaison officers who adjust their engagement to suit those local relationships. For example, even within the Far North Queensland Regiment, each

company will be different due to the communities they deal with. They've got different norms and different cultural expectations. The learning we have to do inside Army is actually trying to understand who we're dealing with—and adjust our practices accordingly.

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Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: To what extent is there outreach in remote Indigenous communities outside of the area of operations for the three RFSUs?

Andrew Gallaway: One of those programs that has been a long running initiative is the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Programme (AACAP). I'm not an engineer myself, but that's where we get a group of engineers who do construction work and send them out to a remote community, for up to six months, as part of an overall program that sits within any state government or territory program, and they do some work out there. It exposes the local community to the Army and gets some practical work done in the community. It's a fantastic way for the Army participants in that organisation to be exposed to the Aboriginal community and reap some benefits themselves from that cultural exposure. That's one example that's been going on since 1997. The AACAP has been a fantastic program for us in terms of building cultural awareness in the Army. You can't help but improve cultural awareness when you're immersed in a community. The AACAP has been an annual program and it's quite intensive in terms of resources, manpower and planning. There's an organisation almost totally dedicated to keeping it running. Not only are we improving our own cultural awareness, but we're also actually exposing the Army to different communities on a regular basis. I would say that there are probably some relationships that endure out of each one of those iterations as well, and we certainly intend

to leverage off that in terms of recruiting and community engagement.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: How realistic is it for the Army to achieve its 2.7% representation target in the set timeframe by 2015 set by COAG?

Andrew Gallaway: I can tell you that it's unlikely that we can achieve that in the timeframe that's been set, which varies between the middle and the end of next year. We are making every effort to improve the trend. Setting that target, or maybe a slightly unrealistic target, makes us strive to increase participation. The 2.7% goal is going

to be extremely challenging to achieve by the end of 2015. I compare it to how the Chief of Army set a 2% increase from 10–12% for female participation, in a very short period of time, and that time is July this year. We applied enormous resources to this, just as we are to the Indigenous folk, but it's a different demographic we're drawing from and it has different challenges and different requirements—and we'll just reach that female target in the timeframe. The Indigenous one is an enormous challenge—to double the number of people—but we are confident that we will achieve it within the next couple of years.

Serving Australia with Pride: How Indigenous Policy is Transforming the Navy

As a reflection of our changing nation, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) is undergoing a major transformation in its organisational culture. One of the key drivers of this change is the development of an Indigenous engagement policy, which has helped increase Indigenous representation throughout the Navy. In what was a broad-ranging and exclusive interview conducted in May this year, **Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe** met and interviewed **Chief Petty Officer Ray Rosendale**, the Navy's principal strategic adviser on the development of Indigenous policy.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: When did the RAN first start a policy of engaging Indigenous Australians?

Ray Rosendale: While there were Indigenous Australians in the Navy, such as Thomas Bungalene of the Victorian Navy who was one of the first Aboriginal sailors in the 1860s, their presence was low key and not acknowledged. I also include Bungaree (after whom the Navy's Indigenous performance group is named) in this—he was quite famous in early colonial Australia and was the

first Australian-born circumnavigator when he sailed around the country with Mathew Flinders.

Government policies of the past stated that you couldn't even be in the military if you said you were an 'Aboriginal,' so they would say they were anything but Indigenous to get in. They wanted to serve their country even when they weren't citizens. Indigenous Australians didn't get promoted past the junior ranks; they rarely got into positions of real responsibility. That was policy then and there was a lot of institutional racism—there are a few notable examples of those who did achieve but not many. We're talking about the period up to the late 1960s. Ironically, while there was a total rejection of Indigenous Australia, on the other hand, there was an acceptance of it. For example, the Navy was proud of adopting Indigenous iconography, such as having the axe, the nulla nulla, and the boomerang on all the crests, and naming ships after the Arrernte and Wuramungu people. Ships have also been named after Australian towns whose names derived from Aboriginal words, like Toowoomba.

Around the Vietnam War, as the nation changed so did the military and more Indigenous people

joined. Some advanced to the rank of Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), but no one got promoted to officer. I can't even tell you who the first officer was. After the 1967 referendum, the highest ranked Indigenous person in the Navy was a Petty Officer. We also had a Captain, but he made it to that rank before he identified as an Aboriginal. There was a real thing in the past where if you identified as an Aboriginal, you felt you weren't going to get promoted. However, if anyone asks me if it is like that today, I say, 'No it's not.' Today the ADF is working very hard at changing its culture.

When I joined in 1992, there was only a small group of identified Indigenous Navy members, perhaps no more than 50. About 20 years ago the nation began to change, and people started joining and identifying, and being proud to say, 'I am an Indigenous Australian.'

Aboriginal people have actually changed the culture of the Navy. Over the last 10 years, successive governments have obviously realised that this was an issue, and saw that we weren't recruiting enough Indigenous Australians, so the ADF has been directed to fix the issue. Since 2006, there's been a greater effort regarding Indigenous engagement and recruitment, and this has led to new policies being put in place.

In 2007, the first Defence Reconciliation Action Plan came into being, something we'd never had before. Then came the Indigenous Employment Strategy. When those two policies came into being, they weren't well known. They weren't universally adopted by senior management, so it was a very slow start.

What came out of that was the Defence Directorate of Indigenous Affairs (DIA). People like me were asked to help out with their programs. They didn't have anybody who met their requirements to fill positions. There were very few senior Indigenous NCOs in Defence, and even fewer officers. Each service devolved its own Indigenous engagement strategy relating back to recruitment, retention and community involvement. Those were the three big areas that all policies led to. That grew to change the way we recruit, and that's grown to change the way we engage communities. I was one of

the first Defence Indigenous Engagement Officers who was actually Indigenous. I worked closely with Warrant Officer Don Bowie, the Army's first Indigenous Recruitment Officer.

We realised we had some issues with recruiting around disadvantage, education, general health—the general social issues that have to do with disenfranchised and disadvantaged people. These young people are smart, committed and intelligent, but it's just that in a lot of cases they haven't had the same advantages that an equivalent Australian youth of non-Indigenous heritage has. Therefore, we offer some extra tutoring or education in fitness and literacy because in some cases, being a second language, lack of proficiency in the English language can be a barrier to recruitment.

More recently, I was appointed as the Indigenous Strategic Advisor to the Chief of Navy. This was a first for the Navy. So there is me and there are soon to be three Indigenous Recruiting Officers around the country. We have seven trained Indigenous Liaison Officers at the moment. We'll try to train about double that in the next 12 months so that each establishment has one or two people who are very aware of the local community, know who the elders are and what the issues are, and are able to engage effectively.

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Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: What strategy is the Navy using to achieve the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) target of 2.7% Indigenous representation?

Ray Rosendale: There's a big push. We are aiming to reach 2.7% and hope to surpass that by late 2016. That figure is only achievable because of the programs we're doing now, because of the way we're recruiting and engaging the communities. The fruits of our labour will come to bear in about two to three years' time. If we stop doing the recruiting and the courses, then it will take a long time to really make Indigenous recruiting a strong part of mainstream recruiting.

We just signed 23 Indigenous recruits—15 women and 8 men—into the Navy through the Defence Indigenous Development Program (DIDP). It's for a full-time job and a pathway straight into the military. Anecdotally, the Indigenous discharge rate is lower than the general discharge rate. So we do appear to be retaining our people well.

Prior to March this year, Indigenous people made up just under 200 of over 14,100 personnel in the regular Navy. In March this year, when we signed on the recruits, it was a 10% increase in real numbers in one day. In the Navy Reserve, the Indigenous composition is less than 1%, or around 50 Indigenous personnel. Today we have many Indigenous Seamen and Able Seamen—probably 190 personnel. Today in the Navy, there are only three Indigenous Chief Petty Officers, four Petty Officers, and five Leading Seamen. We have a couple of Sub-Lieutenants and Lieutenants, and one Lieutenant Commander (Bert Slape), who is the most senior Indigenous officer in the Navy at the moment. In total we now have 207 Indigenous members, which is 1.5% of the total Navy uniformed numbers (approximately 25% of this number are female).

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Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: How is the Navy addressing the shortfall in the recruitment of Indigenous officers?

Ray Rosendale: As I mentioned before, at the moment we've only got a few. What I would like to see and what we're really starting to focus on now are some of the highly educated young Indigenous Australians who are at university. We're starting to work with those people and engage them, saying, 'Come to our university, get paid, wear a uniform, and become Chief of Navy.' There's no reason they can't be.

We're working on increasing the number of Direct Entry Officers. With study tours and the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) tour,

we should start to see results. We have a couple of midshipmen at the ADFA. Lieutenant Beimop Tapim is our first Indigenous doctor, a Torres Strait Islander. We'll have another one soon—a nursing officer studying to be a doctor. In the next five years, you will see more Indigenous officers across the military. In my lifetime, I foresee a senior officer who is Indigenous. When you get to the rank of Commodore, you stand as much chance of being an Admiral as anybody.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Tell us about the scale of the regional diversity among Indigenous personnel within Defence? For example, how different are the Aborigines in Queensland from Western Australia?

Ray Rosendale: A lot are like me and speak a second language at home with family. Many may speak a form of pidgin/Creole English. All three main Torres Strait Islander languages and at least 13 Aboriginal languages are spoken by members of the Navy. I am sure there are more, but not in sizeable numbers. The ones I am aware of include Wik, Yadhagana, Kalkadoon, Kuku Yalanji, Gugu Yimidhirr, Yidinji, Djirbalngan, and Djabugandi in Queensland; Wiradjuri, Yiun, Gumbainggir, and Kamilaroi in NSW; and Yawuru in Western Australia. This tends to represent the areas we have been recruiting from and will increase as our engagement and recruiting program expands. I've focused a lot on remote communities in the last few years. However, the focus is Australia-wide now and we are starting to recruit all over the country. These groups represent those who are currently serving—about 70% are from Queensland (and the majority of them from north Queensland); 20% are from NSW; and the rest of the nation covers the remaining 10%.

In answer to your second question, I'd point out that racially the Aborigines in Queensland and Western Australia are very similar people, but culturally they're not necessarily the same. There are some similarities but also differences, even in their language, dance and spiritual beliefs. While the language may be different, as well as some of the traditions and the stories, there are a lot of cultural similarities as well.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Can you describe the specifics of the Navy's outreach strategies with Indigenous communities?

Ray Rosendale: We have the six-week Indigenous Pre-Recruitment Course (IPRC). The Navy in particular has taken up a couple of courses from this year at HMAS *Cerberus*. These are young people who aren't in the military—they spend six weeks being familiarised with military life. The idea is to prepare them for the recruitment process, so we give them fitness training and assist them with interview skills to get them through. At the moment, their pass rate is only about 20 of 100 recruits. But we're working very hard to improve it, so I expect to see a vast improvement in the years ahead. However, in the Navy Defence Indigenous Development Program (DIDP), we're talking a 65–75% pass rate. We really do get a lot of enquiries from young Indigenous Australians asking how to join. The DIDP is a five-month live-in program and the Navy is running a DIDP in north Queensland. There are two courses a year.

In the Navy DIDP, the young people are sworn in as recruits on a six-month contract. On successful completion of the course, they continue on into permanent service through recruit training at HMAS *Cerberus*. The difference is the Navy has taken them on for full-time employment—and this is the first time ever. The course itself is in Cairns, and then they'll go to *Cerberus*. They do a boot camp and familiarisation training, learn basic military skills, and then go on to TAFE. They're led by Navy full-time staff—this is a first in the country. No one else in Defence has taken on Indigenous recruits the way we have. The majority are still from north Queensland in this course, and there are a few from central southern Queensland and NSW. Over the next year, we expect to see more than half coming from NSW.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: What are the differences in engaging urban Indigenous Australians as opposed to rural communities?

Ray Rosendale: In remote communities a lot of the hierarchies still exist, so you tend to talk to the elders about the youth. You still engage with the youth but you always engage with the elders first: build that trust, listen to what they want, and

then engage with the youth. That's worked very well, listening to the community. For instance, if you were to go to a community like Kowanyama, up on the Cape, just walk in and talk to the high school students and leave again, you would create uproar. A long-term relationship has to be built over a sustained period of time to be successful. Incidentally, we actually just got our first recruit from that community—she's in the Navy right now. I don't think anyone from Kowanyama has ever joined the Navy before. In the more urban communities it's similar, but you tend to engage more directly with the youth. It comes back to more mainstream type engagement. You're still involved with elders and the community leaders, because it's still important, but it's not quite as much. What we say is, 'This isn't the Aboriginal Navy, this is the Australian Navy, and we are an important part of it. It's a real job, it's real money, it's real education and it's real opportunity.' We are certainly breaking down barriers.

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Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: About the challenges associated with outreach programs, let's talk about it this way: You go into a community that has a lot of social problems, such as high unemployment—how do you navigate these issues from a recruitment perspective?

Ray Rosendale: In the past, I did on a few occasions encounter challenges because I was not part of a certain community. They said things like: 'You're not one of us' or 'You don't live here' or 'You don't have our problems.' Some people will never see what we're saying as positive and you've just got to accept it. There's deep history and emotions out there and some people will never get past it, and we should always remember the past and learn from it. But a lot of people are stepping up and, while acknowledging the past, saying, 'We can change the country.' In relation to some of those people who come from

troubled communities, it is a fact that we have lost Indigenous Australians. I refer to them as the 'Lost people' as they will probably never become fully functioning members in our national fabric. We may never be able to get them to full-time employment. But within those communities, there always has been and will be those who are ready to step up and take on the challenges of modern life as community leaders. They have always been there; what we do is engage with them.

The last few years we've been spreading the message: If you want to join us there are a few simple tips—stay out of trouble with the law, stay off drugs and alcohol, stay fit and healthy, and go to school. That message does resonate with a growing number of young Indigenous Australians. For example, the Yarrabah community near Cairns is a very underprivileged community and despondent in many ways. They suffer from high unemployment, high alcohol abuse, and high crime. But they're working very hard to fix that community from within. We've had one person from Yarrabah joining the Navy and then suddenly

two. Now we've got six. Before you know it, we'll have 10. That's how it works, if you'll build it, they'll come.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Aside from achieving the COAG target, how would you describe the Navy's long-term objectives with Indigenous engagement?

Ray Rosendale: I believe that because of the work we have done and continue to do in the future, we will be in a positive and culturally correct position of actually engaging communities through the trust we have built. We will not be able to have Indigenous engagement in the Navy without it. As a result of that trust, you will see a Navy where it's very common to see Indigenous men and women in uniform. In a few years, we are very likely to see an Indigenous Commanding Officer of a ship. It will happen, but it's going to take a lot more work and a lot more effort. I believe that the Navy has got the skills and we have the momentum at present. We are truly becoming the diverse and inclusive Navy we need to be.

OUR PLACE, OUR SKIES: THE STORY OF INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS IN THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

To the Australian public, the overall contribution of Indigenous Australians to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) remains somewhat obscure; however, the recent emphasis of NAIDOC week 2014 has helped bring to the forefront the increasing profile of Indigenous Australians in the ADF. In a timely interview, **Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe** spoke to **Group Captain Lisa Jackson Pulver**, the highest ranking Indigenous official in the RAAF, who also heads the Air Force's Directorate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Can you walk us through the history of Indigenous engagement with the Air Force?

Lisa Jackson Pulver: Aboriginal people have always served their country. We've been serving our country for 60,000 years, and people have given their lives for country. This ethic resonates between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people when it comes to service to country. The RAAF is 100 years old and we understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been serving throughout the life of the Air Force. Whether they've been identified as such is

a different discussion. The ballpark number of people who served with the Air Force in World War II, who are Aboriginal people as far as we know, is I believe in the many hundreds. We have a number of notable Aboriginal people who were pilots, and there were at least two fighter pilots from World War II. The first Indigenous Australian to be commissioned as an officer in the Air Force was also in World War II. According to our knowledge, Squadron Leader David Hall was the first person commissioned in the RAAF who has been identified as an Aboriginal. As for Korea and Vietnam, I know a lot served there, and many of them are still alive today, like now retired Uncle Harry Allie, currently the Air Force's Aboriginal Elder. He was a Warrant Officer, in a technical trade as a fitter and turner, and is still serving his country today as our Air Force Elder. When it comes to more recent conflicts in Afghanistan and the Middle East, we know of at least 100 or more Indigenous Air Force personnel who have served.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: What is the Indigenous makeup of the Air Force today?

Lisa Jackson Pulver: Indigenous personnel are serving in various capacities, from the most junior of ranks all the way through to my role as group captain. We've got a number of warrant officers and flight sergeants as well as many other roles. There are also a growing number of people coming into the officer ranks, and I think it's only a matter of time before we see our first one star. We don't have a fighter pilot at the moment, but we're pretty keen to grow one, and I reckon it will happen in the next few years. I also believe that one day through our recruiting, we will have someone who will become the first Aboriginal Chief of Air Force. We've got some really good talent in the organisation, so at least one of them will be capable and progress into those high star ranks. In the Air Force, we have about 14,000 personnel and are the smallest of the three services. The people who are Aboriginal in this organisation are from everywhere. I would easily say there would probably be quite a few Kooris and Murris (people of the east coast of Australia) and others from the west. There are

some from central Queensland and others from the Northern Territory. Currently, there are 115 personnel identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, with the majority being Aboriginal. That is an underestimation. My understanding is that it's likely to be closer to 200 personnel right now. About 1% of our permanent Air Force identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, most administrative data sets in Australia agree that underreporting of Indigenous status remains an issue. According to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agenda, their baseline for employment is for 2.7%. We have a way to go, but I believe we will get there in the next five years.

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Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: When did the RAAF commence a policy to recruit and integrate Indigenous Australians?

Lisa Jackson Pulver: I head the team at the Directorate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (DATSIA) within the RAAF Personnel Branch, which was created in late 2013. I have two full-time people and a number of reservists working for me. We host interns throughout the year and, if we are running a program, numbers increase temporarily. I work closely with the senior leadership of the Air Force as a specialist adviser to the Chief. DATSIA contributes to academic programs within Defence, assists in cultural activities and awareness programs, and works to broaden the understanding of diversity and inclusion within the organisation. The Air Force is doing amazing things in this area—our leaders are accessible to us, make time to work with the community, and provide leadership in this space. The Air Force is the only service arm in the ADF to have its own Indigenous affairs directorate. I do not believe the Army and Navy have anything quite like this. However, each service has its own way of approaching the broader Defence

Indigenous agenda, and each has a commitment to the Reconciliation Action Plan and Employment Strategies. For example, the Air Force has an elder-in-residence—Uncle Harry Allie. We also have a specialist adviser to the Chief, we have DATSIA, and we have a solid work program within our strategy, 'Our Place, Our Skies.'

About four years ago, the Air Force started working through a process of defining our own measures within our own programs specific for our own space.

The Air Force is part of the larger Defence organisation working in a way to provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Most of the early direction has come from the Defence People Group and their Directorate of Indigenous Affairs. About four years ago, the Air Force started working through a process of defining our own measures within our own programs specific for our own space. We remain committed to working collaboratively across the organisation and the broader Defence agenda, and are contributing strong Air Force specific initiatives into the mix. For example, we run short study tours and base visits and weeklong total immersion programs for Aboriginal youth interested in aviation careers; arrange Elder visits to local bases; and provide personnel for NAIDOC week activities, Reconciliation events, and ANZAC day ceremonies. We attend local talks, visit communities, and support bases to engage with their local Aboriginal communities. All this adds up to us being able to say to people, 'We are a good place for your youth to enter and serve.'

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Tell us about the Air Force's Indigenous engagement programs and how they are implemented?

Lisa Jackson Pulver: There are a couple of pre-recruitment programs. One in particular is called the Indigenous Pre-Recruitment Program. It is run by the Directorate of Indigenous Affairs

and is a six-week program that helps people with any gaps in education and fitness on an operating Navy, Army or Air Force base. There are about 60 people in the course, and there are about four courses per year. A recent one held on HMAS *Cerberus* was under the command of an Air Force officer, and staffed by uniform members of each service. Out of that, quite a few of the kids, I think 12 or so, have put down Air Force as their preference. The program is run in collaboration with a TAFE. If the kids' numeracy is lacking, they are helped to raise it over the course of this intensive program. If their fitness is a bit dodgy, they certainly become fitter by participating in the course. Of those who graduate, the vast majority can be recruited into one of the services. That's a really important program, but it is high intensity, it is residential, and it is five to six weeks long. That's a big commitment, and there are a number of them running each year. They're going up in numbers so I think there's anywhere between 30 and 100 people in those courses.

What we are doing in the Air Force-specific ones is giving schoolkids an opportunity to have a taste of what the Air Force life is like. We have a short program, called the RAAF Indigenous Youth Program (RAAFIYP), that is run out of DATSIA and allows 12 kids who are interested in aviation careers or in the Air Force to come and 'play.' We do that with civilian partners by way of Boorowa Aviation. This is an organisation that trains pilots, including Aboriginal pilots, and they work with a group called Air Service Australia. They're the people with little red and yellow planes, doing shark-spotting and rescue off the NSW coast. Their first Aboriginal pilot was Adam Brady, and he actually flies the kids to the program in the plane; for many of these young people, it's their first flight. It's a small single-engine plane—we call it a 'bug smasher'—and it just gets better from there. By the end of the four-night experience, the participants have come across some of the wonderful stuff they can do in aviation, and even though the idea is not to recruit into the Air Force, these kids get an idea of what's available to them. Indeed, we have a lot of young people in the pipeline at the moment.

We know of about 70 young people in different parts of the recruitment system. There are a number of them undergoing recruit school right now, and a larger number in the first few years of their service.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Which states tend to provide the majority of the Air Force's Indigenous recruits?

Lisa Jackson Pulver: For us, it's all over Australia. A lot of the effort specifically for the Air Force comes out of Canberra, where DATSIA is based. What we do with the RAAF is work with the communities around our bases and with the large population groups in the urban environments. Our Indigenous study tours are occurring on all our bases around NSW; we've got other initiatives to start in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia next year. We are a national organisation, but the reality is—and this is where the demographics and my background come in—that the vast majority of Aboriginal people live in large urban environments. Almost two-thirds live in south Queensland and NSW, primarily around the coast, and the majority of those people are under 22, which is about 50% of the population, and have finished high school. So when you start looking at that and noticing what the entry requirements are, that is, to have good quality Year 10 or Year 12, with a pass in maths and English, then you're looking at some who have had the opportunity to go to high school and finish the HSC. At the moment, a lot of our attention is going into large urban centres, and that is just completely pragmatic. We have some excellent programs that will introduce people into the Air Force and that can help them once they are in. We are growing a capability within our organisation and within the communities we serve. We have come a long way, especially around recognising Aboriginal service people of the past. Now we are about growing that strong history into the future.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: How has the Air Force approached the inherent challenges of outreach with Indigenous communities nationwide?

Lisa Jackson Pulver: We thought that initially it was going to be really hard, but when we started talking and working with communities, listening carefully to what communities are saying to us, often the Elders in the community and the spokespersons would say, 'Yeah, you know what, my dad was in the Air Force or my uncle was in the Navy.' There are many in the communities who actually have a story about a close relationship with Defence through a relative. The more we engage, the more people come to us telling us about their service, or that of their families—so

We have some excellent programs that will introduce people into the Air Force and that can help them once they are in.

much history that has not been recorded. However, one of the issues we do have is that people don't think that going into the Air Force is achievable for their kids because they think that the Air Force is only about flying planes. Now, that is a very important part of our business, of course, our planes and our pilots—we are the Air Force. But the vast majority of jobs in our organisation are not the jobs of being at the pointy end of the aircraft. All of us have a role, and collectively we make up the Air Force, no matter what our job is in the organisation. If you look at the Air Force as being a major city, every single thing that you need in the city to keep it running is what you need at an Air Force base. You need transport drivers through to fire fighters, from dog handlers through to the military police and security, from radar officers through to mechanics and IT experts; you name it, we've got it: nurses, doctors, lawyers, cooks, logisticians, musicians, photographers, etc. It's a very broad organisation, and I think the biggest job we've got is letting people know how broad we are. If you've got a kid who's really interested in building bridges, we've got engineering roles for someone like that. If you've got someone who's really good with handicrafts, building stuff, and making things with their hands, we've got life

support tech roles for you. We can fit a person into a role very easily because there's a lot of diversity in our workforce.

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe: Taking into account the strides in Indigenous integration that have been made in recent years, tell us what the Air Force's future objectives are?

Lisa Jackson Pulver: Continuing on with what we're doing and working from the ground up, working with our communities, listening carefully to what they want and need, and ensuring that we are a place that people know they can send their kids to, and that we will grow them into Air Force officers and airmen and airwomen. That we continue to look after people once they are recruited into our organisation and grow them. That even when they do leave, or want to leave, they have got absolutely fantastic skills that are transferable into the workforce. That we embrace

family and community and view the world using an Indigenous lens, with our Air Force lenses. That we are an organisation that is a place of choice for people to send their kids to. Air Force is going to continue on the trajectory we started—to continue its growth into being the exemplar organisation in diversity and inclusion that it possibly can be. We are a technical organisation that offers a wide range of opportunities for our peoples—the big thing for us is to continue getting that message out there. Where will we be in three years? Growing an increasing proportion of our members into higher ranks and being an organisation that understands the role of belonging and country in all our lives. We will have the next generation of air command and pilots under training. In five years' time, I expect that we would have—in our ranks—someone who could easily become Australia's first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Defence Force Chief.



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