

## Indigenous youth get a taste of military life

Young Indigenous people from the east coast of Australia recently got to explore military life first-hand as part of the Defence inaugural Indigenous Military Experience (IME) Week.



*Indigenous Military Experience Week participants belay a climber on the rock climbing wall on the high ropes course at HMAS Cerberus, Victoria.*

Held at HMAS Cerberus from 26 August to 2 September 2013, the week was designed to give 18 young Indigenous Australians, aged from 15 to 18 years, a one-week military experience to build life skills that will help them to become strong participants and role models in their communities.

Lead instructor of the program Army Warrant Officer Colin Watego said this exciting new initiative has helped provide these young Indigenous people with a whole new outlook.

“Some of these individuals have had some challenges in life, so to be able to see the changes we have witnessed in such a short time is fantastic,” Warrant Officer Watego said.

“This week let them explore opportunities that they may have felt were closed to them before.”

During the week, participants got to face many challenges including Army camping out, Navy

mud run and high ropes course, and Air Force's fitness test.

Additionally, all participants also had training in values, ethics and leadership that was tied in with the ADF values system plus Indigenous cultural activities including a workshop on Walking in two worlds – cultural integrity and performance in the workforce.

“The challenges these individuals have faced during the week have been incredible,” Warrant Officer Watego said.

“Not only did they deal with being away from home, but also learned to overcome their own personal problems. It has been really rewarding to witness.

“Seeing them come together as a team and learning to rely on one another was fantastic; I am really proud of them,” he said.

The Directorate of Indigenous Affairs (DIA), through the Defence Indigenous Employment Strategy, runs a range of courses aimed at assisting Indigenous Australians to enter the Australian Defence Force. Further information is available on the Defence website at [http://www.defence.gov.au/fr/IA/DRAP2011\\_2014.htm](http://www.defence.gov.au/fr/IA/DRAP2011_2014.htm).

Imagery is available on the Australian Defence Image Library at <http://images.defence.gov.au/S20131359>.