

## Indigenous students walk thin blue line

THERE'S AN over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system and an under-representation in police forces.

NSW Police is addressing the issue with the recent enrolment of 25 new indigenous students in the associate degree in policing practice at the Charles Sturt University campus within the Goulburn Police Academy in southern NSW. They join the 27 other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are further along in their studies.

NSW is unique among Australian law enforcement jurisdictions in that entry level police training is conducted in collaboration with a university and candidates have to gain an associate degree. Further study can articulate this into a full bachelor degree. It's an arrangement that has been in place with CSU since the late 1990s and is a legacy of recommendations for better police training made by the Wood royal commission into police corruption.

The rise in indigenous student numbers at the Goulburn academy is attributed to a cohesive relationship between NSW Police, TAFE NSW and CSU. One initiative to attract indigenous students that stands out is the Indigenous Police Recruitment Out West Delivery program, which was first rolled out in Dubbo in 2008 to provide indigenous people in western NSW with the necessary academic and physical requirements to join the force.

IPROWD is an 18-week TAFE bridging program funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. It comprises a certificate III in vocational and study pathways along with activities to assist students navigate the recruitment processes of NSW Police.

CSU school of policing lecturer Paul Comino explains that as well as providing an

education qualification comparable to a higher school certificate with a university admissions index of 66 or more — the basic requirement for entry into the academy — IPROWD also facilitates the transition to a tertiary environment.

"As part of the course, students spend three days at the police academy familiarising themselves, getting a feel for the place and spending time with current students," Comino says.

IPROWD is advertised in the *National Indigenous Times* and the *Koori Mail* but Comino says its strongest promotion is by word of mouth. "The word is out there among the Koori communities and the word is good," he says. "If you want to get into the cops, [IPROWD is seen as] the way to go."

It's a selective program: the 14 students in the present intake at Dubbo were chosen from more than 100 applicants. Local police are involved in the interview process, conduct background checks to assess professional suitability and follow the candidates' progress in a positive mentoring role. Local Aboriginal elders drop by classes to show support as do local Aboriginal community liaison officers.

"The students get a lot of encouragement," Comino says.

Not all IPROWD graduates join the force but Comino says all are having a positive effect on the community. "They're walking out with a good qualification and we've seen graduates working in an Aboriginal community liaison officer role, one is studying psychology at CSU and two other female IPROWD students have become general support officers with the NSW Police."

IPROWD was expanded to include Tamworth TAFE last year and will be rolled out this year in another six centres across NSW with high indigenous populations. Likely locations include Kempsey and Lismore.

ALISTAIR JONES

{ BEHIND THE JOB AD }

## Sky's the limit for space roles

Talented people are needed to bolster Australia's space research efforts

CAMERON COOPER

THINK of space science research and it is fair to say that Australia does not spring to mind as an industry leader.

While astronaut Andy Thomas has won deserved acclaim for his role in various space shuttle missions, the nation's work in this area has largely flown under the radar since being at the forefront of satellite and rocket technology in the 1960s.

Researchers at RMIT University in Melbourne are hoping to start turning that reputation around through their contribution to the Australian Space Research Program, which focuses on disciplines such as in-space tracking and navigation, space weather and atmospheric and climate modelling.

Other participants in the program include the University of NSW, Curtin University of Technology, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, GPSat Systems Australia and EOS Space Systems.

Kefei Zhang, a professor and director in the school of mathematical and geospatial sciences at RMIT, admits that in the past Australia's space research efforts have lagged those of some other developed countries despite the presence of some world-class talent.

"I think historically the problem is that our market has been too small, so it's difficult to have a [strong] industry," he says.

Space researchers

WHERE: RMIT University in Melbourne  
CLOSING: September 19  
INQUIRIES: Kefei Zhang, (03) 9925 3272

The absence of a strong government body to co-ordinate the sector has also been an issue.

"It's not really an industry where you can make money and commercialise things, so that's why we did not have that kind of government organisation to co-ordinate and to promote [us], but suddenly people are realising this is a huge market and we have done quite well in research and we need to promote our science and industry technology in this area."

A 2008 Senate inquiry into the state of Australia's space science drove home the point, noting that Africa had successfully launched its first satellite from a base in Kourou, French Guiana, while Australia had yet to achieve such a landmark.

"So a little country [in Africa] could launch their own satellite but we couldn't," Zhang notes.

The federal government's response has been to set up the \$40 million Australian Space Research Program, including a space policy unit, in the hope of tapping into a global market for commercial satellite-based products and services it estimates at more than \$100 billion a year.

"It's a huge market," Zhang



Kefei Zhang of RMIT's school of mathematical and geospatial sciences

says, adding that he believes Australia can win a share of that lucrative industry.

To further the cause, RMIT is seeking at least one senior project manager and six research fellows to work in its space research team.

The project manager will assist in areas such as global positioning systems, geodesy (the science of the size and shape of the Earth), space tracking and meteorology.

The research fellows will examine disciplines such as applied mathematics, space physics, meteorology and global navigation satellite systems.

Given the requirement to pro-

mote space research, Zhang says candidates for the project manager role should have the ability to "sell our research" and liaise with relevant government organisations and politicians.

"Certainly, personality is an important consideration and because we have a large group of people they have to get along well and work with people."

The research fellow positions will involve work on the development of algorithms for new-generation navigation and geo-environmental satellite programs to enhance Australia's capability in space research.

They will also assess data drawn from the satellite networks of countries such as the US, Germany and Taiwan.

Candidates should preferably have a few years' postdoctoral experience in a relevant discipline and be capable of publishing their research findings.

"[They must] be able to write high-quality papers," Zhang says. "And also having programming skills is important because much of our work is to do with algorithm development and programming and software systems. So that's very important."

He notes that the successful

candidates will have the chance to work in a fascinating field with talented peers. "It's very exciting research and very important.

"We want to [expand] this area [and] we want to attract high-calibre people internationally."

Also on the agenda, ultimately, will be the task of ensuring that Australia belatedly launches its own satellite.

Discussions are being held with NASA and experts from Taiwan who have experience in the field to make this a reality.

"We are talking about the next generation of space, so this is our next step, our aim," Zhang says.