



PLO Filipino Luafutu talks with members of the Samoan community Totuvao (Paula) Tuiatua (left) and Tuiatua Lemavae Kolio (Greg) Tuiatua.

Chiefs bridge the gap in multicultural communities

By Jacqui McClure, Media and Public Affairs Branch

Samoan Police Liaison Officers (PLOs) Filipino Luafutu and Jon Ropati have dedicated their roles to encouraging a greater understanding between cultures.

Both are Chiefs in the Samoan community; a standing which means they are well respected and can influence change.

Nine years ago, Indigenous elders approached PLO Luafutu and suggested he apply for a PLO position to help combat rising crime rates in the area. He has been working with the Indigenous and Samoan communities in Ipswich ever since.

“They could see that a local PLO was needed because as the community continued to grow, violence between the cultures increased,” PLO Luafutu said.

“Our main focus is to educate the community. I do a lot of work at local schools to teach the youth about other cultures, and to plan activities that help relieve boredom.

“It is often the boredom that leads to kids getting in trouble with the law.”

One significant event PLO Luafutu has been helping with is encouraging the Samoan and Pacific Islander community to visit

and acknowledge the Indigenous elders at their meeting place at Purga.

“We started the initiative about five years ago, and it has been running each year since then. It is important to get the kids back to their culture,” PLO Luafutu said.

In his four years as a PLO in Inala, PLO Ropati has been working towards educating young people in Inala about policing as a career.

“It is important for these kids to know what options are available to them. I go into schools and talk about Australian laws and what they need to do to be successful in this community,” PLO Ropati said.

“I also talk to international students and educate them about Australian culture and how the laws are different to what they are used to in the Pacific Islands, such as Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands.

“It is a very rewarding career. Local Samoans are often apprehensive about speaking with police, so having a PLO gives them someone they are comfortable to talk to, particularly because of language barriers,” PLO Ropati said.

Other Samoan PLOs are Judy Pasene in Cairns and Ruby Pritchard in Logan. ■