



Proper person for the job

By Louise Allen, Media and Public Affairs Branch

Eight years ago Andrea Bak was living in a Kenyan refugee camp after fleeing from the Sudanese government.

He spent four years in the camp and was considered to be a community elder. Other refugees

would go to him when they needed help or advice.

Today he continues to assist his people as a Police Liaison Officer (PLO) in South Brisbane.

“When I arrived in Australia in 1998 I was working as a teacher’s aid and understood the problems

new arrivals were experiencing,” PLO Bak said.

“People come here and are very confused and don’t know what to do or how to get help.

“I thought I was the proper person to assist with their problems,” he said.

PLO Bak said part of his job was to help the Sudanese and other African communities understand Australian laws, cultures and ways of life.

“Police are very different back home. Where I come from domestic violence and child issues are not police matters. They’re considered private family matters and police only respond as a last resort.

“It can be very hard to be brought up in a certain way of life and then have to adapt to completely new cultural laws and social codes of conduct.

“I have to explain that the role of police is very different here – police can help people as well as investigate crime,” he said.

PLO Bak said he also spent his time working with other police officers educating them on African cultures and attitudes.

“Most Africans who come to Australia have very basic English which can make it very hard for them to communicate. They can feel uncomfortable and isolated.

“Ongoing education will result in a better understanding and acceptance between African communities, the Queensland Police Service and the wider community.

“Understanding each other will help us all work better together,” he said.



PLO Andrea Bak (left) with Senior Constable Nancy Lee and Sara Charles-Woll.