

PLO builds bridge to better life

By Brett Davis, Media and Public Affairs Branch

Police Liaison Officer (PLO) Kieu Oanh Do's background gives her more motivation than most to help improve the lives of people around her.

PLO Do, her brother, sister and mother arrived in Australia in the early 1980s. They were sponsored to the country by her father who had made the perilous journey before them as a refugee from the Vietnam War.

Four years ago, she put a career in pharmacy behind her to become a PLO at Inala.

The result is a role which PLO Do sees as, most importantly, a bridge builder between the police and the Australian-Vietnamese community.

Breaking down the language barrier was the biggest step, but also it was essential to build trust within the community for the police, she said.

"People are traditionally afraid of authority and don't normally approach the police, and also if they have a problem they prefer to deal with it within the family to save face," PLO Do said.

In her time as a PLO she has seen a definite improvement in the responsiveness of the community in approaching police, particularly over matters such as domestic violence.

"When I first started not a lot of women even knew there was anything they could do about it because it was considered okay back in Vietnam.

"Now instead of holding back, many of these women come to the police for help," PLO Do said.

She is one of four Vietnamese PLOs. The others are Loc Tran, who is also based at Inala, Nhi-Thuy Vu at Brisbane City Police Beat and Tam Tran at Dutton Park Police Station.

In addition to her work as a PLO, she also helps to organise many community activities including celebrations for Vietnamese festivals, and English and Vietnamese language lessons.

Several years ago at a Vietnamese community festival she was teamed with a PLO to act as emcees for the event. It made her think of the opportunities that might exist with a change of career as there was little chance of her progressing in the pharmacy field.

PLO Do said she drew great satisfaction from helping victims of crime, liaising with community groups and working with various QPS units such as the Juvenile Aid Bureau and Asian Specialist Unit.

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"I feel very lucky to be able to do this job and as a Vietnamese person have the opportunity to pursue a career that means something and helps out the people in my community," she said.