



Indigenous trainees a step closer to police careers

By Penny Doust, Media and Public Affairs Branch

Matthew Lancaster is a step closer to fulfilling his long-term goal of becoming a police officer after completing the Justice Entry Program (JEP).

JEP was initiated three years ago as a more successful way of introducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to potential careers with the Queensland Police Service (QPS).

It aims to recognise job-related experience, formal training and other life experiences for trainees who may not have completed enough school education to apply for entry as a police recruit.

Mr Lancaster, 23, from Yeppoon, was one of 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees to graduate from JEP in January.

He and eight other graduates have since been accepted into the Police Recruit Operational Vocational Education program as police recruits.

Mr Lancaster said he had tried tertiary study but it had not been for him. JEP was better as participants became part of one big happy family.

Although it was hard to be away from family, the police officers involved were extremely helpful and showed a lot of compassion when problems arose, he said.

"All the trainees formed a strong bond and we all encouraged each other with the academic work as



The recent Justice Entry Program graduating class.

well as the physical challenges. It made me physically fit and got my brain working again."

Mr Lancaster said he had always wanted to be a police officer and follow in the footsteps of his uncle, an officer in Victoria.

JEP is a six-month full-time course at the Queensland Police Academy in Oxley.

Participants in the most recent program ranged in age from 21 to 40 and came from areas including Cairns, Townsville, Maryborough,

the Gold and Sunshine Coasts and northern New South Wales.

Senior Sergeant Rob Richards, the Program Coordinator, said it was the third year JEP had been offered, resulting in more than 20 trainees going on to become police officers.

Trainees who successfully complete the program attain a Certificate IV in Justice (Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islander People), which is an Australian National Training Authority endorsed qualification.

Core units of the course include preparing court documents, analysing and presenting research information and a senior first aid certificate.

In 2004, the QPS Justice Entry Program was recognised as one of Australia's three best training initiatives through being a finalist in the Australian Training Initiative Award category of the Australian Training Awards.