



Officer helps make refugees feel right at home

By Penny Doust, Media and Public Affairs Branch



Sergeant Karl Grundgeiger explains the Indigenous Licensing Program to Mohamed Kesselly from Liberia (left) and Fabrice Jabo from Rwanda (right).

The winner of a prestigious multicultural award was drawn to cross cultural policing by his own migrant background.

Sergeant Karl Grundgeiger recently received an Australasian Police

Multicultural Advisory Bureau Award for his work with African refugees on Brisbane's northside.

The work was done through his role as the Cross Cultural Liaison Officer for Metropolitan North Police Region.

Sergeant Grundgeiger said he had strong feelings and an interest in multiculturalism because his parents emigrated from Europe in the 1950s and experienced difficulties such as the language barrier.

'the refugees I deal with love Australia because of its friendly people and safer communities'

"I can associate with some of the problems that African immigrants are having because my father spoke German and my mother was Swiss," he said.

But just as Sergeant Grundgeiger's parents settled into their new life so will the hundreds of African families he works with from countries such as Sudan, Eritrea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Burundi.

Until recently the majority of African refugees arriving in Queensland were settled in Brisbane's southern suburbs, but they are now being settled on Brisbane's northside. This has made it one of the fastest growing refugee populations in the state, creating a need to approach and promote service providers in the area.

As a result, Sergeant Grundgeiger has been responsible for police participation in Family, Culture and the Law information sessions for members of the Australian Sudanese community at the Zillmere Police-Citizens Youth Club (PCYC).

“Many African refugees are reluctant to approach police officers because of negative experiences they have had in their homeland. There’s a general mistrust or fear of police,” Sergeant Grundgeiger said.

“Encouraging migrants and refugees to use PCYCs not only gives them a space for cultural pursuits but will help break down the barriers with police because officers run PCYCs.

“PCYCs have already been successfully used in a trial project to help refugees get their driver’s licence through the Indigenous Licensing Program as many refugees have driven without ever having a licence,” he said.



Fabrice Jabo spends time behind the wheel while Mohamed Kesselly and Sergeant Karl Grundgeiger look on.

The Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau Awards were set up to recognise people who have contributed significantly to the development and advancement of partnerships

between police and Australia’s culturally diverse communities.

Sergeant Grundgeiger said he was surprised and honoured to have won the award as many good

projects were happening around the state.

“The best part is knowing that the refugees I deal with love Australia because of its friendly people and safer communities,” he said. ■

Police career beckons after scholarship

A week-long work experience stint could turn into a life-time career choice for 16-year-old Shane-Lee Walker.

The Year 12 student at Peace Lutheran College in Cairns recently did work experience with the Queensland Police Service (QPS) in her hometown of Hope Vale.

“She couldn’t believe it (that she had the chance to do work experience),” Shane-Lee’s grandmother Alice Walker said. “She really enjoyed it.”

The work experience was sponsored by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education to Employment Scholarship Scheme.

Under the watchful eyes of Sergeant Andrew Luhrs and Senior Constable Brendan Poustie, Shane-Lee was shown around the community, enabling her to see firsthand what it was like to be a police officer in regional Queensland.



Shane-Lee Walker on work experience.

Shane-Lee had already wanted to pursue a career as a police officer, and her experience at Hope Vale Police Station reinforced her plans.

She is aiming to start tertiary studies next year and will eventually apply to become a police recruit.