

## **Indigenous Pre-Recruit Program (IPRP)**

Established by the Chief of Army in 2016, the Indigenous Pre-Recruit Program (IPRP) is a tri-service program that provides Indigenous candidates with a pathway to apply for service through cultural mentoring, physical training, resilience development and confidence building.

IPRP Platoon Commander Army Lieutenant Cody Mills said a key feature of the IPRP was its cultural mentoring component, which aimed to enable the recruits to find commonality between the ADF values of Service, Courage, Respect, Integrity, and Excellence and the values of their Indigenous culture.

“There are recruits who attend this program who have had a disconnect with their Indigenous culture, or lost their knowledge and connection to it through generations while at the same time there are recruits who come to the program with a vast knowledge of their culture, history, customs and traditions.

“The IPRP allows recruits to share their knowledge with their peers and instructors, and allows recruits to build confidence and impart knowledge to one another, giving all the participants a sense of identity and purpose, which overall builds resilience and confidence,” he said.

“Since IPRP’s introduction in 2016, it has been extremely successful in graduating soldiers, sailors and airmen/airwomen with a positive start to their service with the ADF. These members are now part of the ADF and are able to share their story and knowledge with future generations, and maintain relationships between those who completed the program and are in a different locations/job.

“In alignment with the Defence Reconciliation Action Plan 2019 -2022, IPRP contributes to the governments’ ‘Closing the Gap’ strategy and Chief of Army’s requirement to increase Indigenous participation in the Army. In the first half of 2020, 13 Army recruits started this program and all 13 have graduated from the 1st Recruit Training Battalion (1 RTB). There are currently a further seven Army recruits from IPRP in training at 1 RTB and I look forward their success,” LT Mills said.

### **Our Indigenous Military History – We fought together in many theatres of war**

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#### ***Reginald Saunders MBE***

Reginald Saunders was born in 1920 in Victoria. Both his father, Walter (Chris) Saunders and his uncle, William Reginald Rawlings MM fought in World War One. Following this family military tradition Reg and his brother Harry, enlisted in World War Two. Tragically, Harry was killed in action on the Kokoda Trail.

Reg proved to be a natural soldier and became a popular Non-Commissioned Officer in the 2/7th Battalion. He saw action in Libya, Greece and Crete. During the British evacuation of Crete in May 1941, Reg was one of several hundred left behind.

He eventually rejoined his battalion in New Guinea and in late 1944 attended officer training in Victoria. Reg was commissioned Lieutenant and went back to New Guinea as a platoon commander in the 2/7th Battalion.

Reg returned to the Army when the Korean War began. He was promoted to Captain and led Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, through fierce fighting, including the battle at Kapyong in April 1951. Reg left Korea in October 1952 and resigned from the Regular Army in 1954.

In 1969 Reg became one of the first Aboriginal Liaison Officers for the Office of Aboriginal Affairs. In 1971 he was appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) and in 1985 was appointed to the Council of the Australian War Memorial.

