

DFC staff conquer the Kokoda Trail

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Paul Vandenberg and Kelly Sambo, from the Strategy, Policy and Aboriginal Outcomes Unit, conquered the 97km Kokoda Trail. This was part of the Jobs Australia Foundation **Indigenous Youth Leadership Program**.

Their journey took place from 1-10 August 2010, which marks the 68th anniversary of the battle at Papua New Guinea. All 23 participants (5 mentors and 18 mentees) survived the elements of the Kokoda Trek: heat, humidity, cold, wet, mud and the surprisingly large amount of tree roots!

The Program was developed for young people and their mentors to build leadership skills and abilities that will:

- give them the skills and confidence necessary to effectively engage in community issues;
- provide an opportunity to learn, understand and become aware of another Indigenous culture; and
- share with Indigenous Papuans experiences as Indigenous Australians.

The Program seeks to encourage and motivate participants to become leaders and role models within their communities and lead positive change.

Paul is mentoring two young people, Kelly Sambo and Tyrone Roderick (from the South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy), both South Australians who have made huge strides in their personal development while in the Program.

He said: "Throughout the program it has been great to see both mentees growing and overcoming the challenges they faced during the trek. At various parts along the track they were required to undertake a number of tasks and duties and they excelled and performed with high distinction."

The Kokoda Track is a well-known historical trail from World War II where Australian soldiers fought the Japanese army. Between 21 July and 16 November 1942, Australia lost more than 600 soldiers who were either killed or died of wounds during the battle. A further 1000 were wounded. Some of the soldiers were buried along the track or in graveyards at Efogi and Kokoda. After the War, all the graves of those killed were brought into the Bomana War Cemetery near Port Moresby.

Over the next two years, Team SA will be planning a community project in Papua New Guinea and hopes to have the details of the project finalised and implemented within the next 12 months.

The Jobs Australia Foundation has asked Paul to become a member of their board, which he has accepted.

Paul, Kelly and Tyrone would like to thank DFC, the Chief Executives' Group on Aboriginal Affairs (CEGAA) and in particular, Joslene Mazel and Olive Bennell, for their support in undertaking the Program.

A fantastic achievement for all!

