



Long way to go just to catch up with friends

By **STEPHEN O'GRADY**

When Kawungan State Primary School principal Steve Case normally talks to his year six teacher Rob Brennan he just walks 100 metres to Rob's classroom.

But last week Steve had to travel 8000km to the middle of the Malaysian jungle to meet Rob and his 113 Army Reserve soldiers as they were learning about jungle survival.

The trip was all part of Operation Bosslift, where 20 bosses like Steve, mostly from south-east Queensland, were flown out to meet their people during their Army Reserve service.

"As long as I've known him Rob has been in the Army Reserve," Steve said.

"I know he has to be away from time to time - this time for three months - but we have always been able to get round it by planning ahead and booking a supply teacher while he's away.

"Rob is now a Major so I was keen to see how he responded to being in command. He's a very relaxed bloke at school and now I know there's very little difference in the field from back home - but he is able to articulate where the boundaries are.

"I was so impressed by his ability to relate to generation Y with respect, his clarity in communicating with them - and how they respond positively.

"Having seen him in com-



Major Rob Brennan catching up on news from back home with his civilian boss Kawungan State Primary School Principal Steve Case in the Malaysian jungle.
 Photos: Kasun Ubayasiri

mand of over 100 soldiers I know I'll now be giving him more strategic involvement when he's back at school - in planning, strategic development, trusting him with budgets and so on."

Being away for three months has meant Rob has missed some major family milestones.

"I missed my youngest son's Year 12 graduation ceremony, both daughters' birthdays, and our family Christmas, as well as the swearing in of my other son as he joined the Regular Army.

"This Christmas I never felt so isolated but thanks to

wi-fi internet, my family had set up a laptop at the Christmas table. My parents were there too so I talked to them all over Christmas lunch."

Soldiers like Rob have to volunteer to be in the Reserve and then have to volunteer again to serve overseas.

Of the 100,000 Australians in uniform some 45,000 are in the Reserve. As well as choosing to serve overseas they can also volunteer for major events within Australia such as security duties at the Commonwealth Games and the Olympics.

The bosses are compensated financially while their employees are away on duty.



Major Rob Brennan taking a few moments to jot down a few last-minute pointers.