

Making Difference

Back in October, we reported that Fleet Services Diesel Mechanic Craig Tanti had taken six months leave to help the Australian Defence Force in the Solomon Islands.

Craig has been a member of the 3rd/9th Lighthorse Regiment with the Army Reserves for about three years and took the opportunity to join the Regular Army's Australian Defence Force contribution to the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

Guadalcanal

Guadalcanal is one of the approximately 900 islands east of Papua New Guinea and is a province of the Solomon Islands. It's famous for its mountainous and heavy jungle terrain.

The island has a population of about 540,000 people, with nearly half under 14 years of age, and most people live in small towns and villages. While the official language is English, the main language spoken is Pidgin English, plus many indigenous dialects.

Following training in Queensland, he left Australia in early December for Guadalcanal in the Solomons, where he will be until April.

Fleet Workshop Coordinator Brenton Giles said Craig has kept in regular contact with his colleagues through email and phone calls.

"He often rings the workshop and all the boys will speak to him for a couple of minutes each. Craig has a very strong support base, made up of both his family and his workmates at Fleet," Brenton said.

RAMSI's aim is to restore law and order and economic governance in the province, with Craig involved in peacekeeping patrols and assisting with community projects such as rebuilding schools and hospitals.

Some of his duties include general foot patrols through the incredibly steep countryside, vehicle patrols through towns and villages and mechanical work on the Army's vehicles.

Brenton said Craig is well and enjoying his time on the island, especially the interaction with the children there.

However, one of the biggest challenges has been adjusting to the climate. "He reckons that the humidity is about 98 per cent and all your clothing is continually soaked with sweat. They're living in canvas tents and have only a couple of electric fans for cooling."

Prior to Christmas, Fleet personnel teamed up with Craig's family to compile a video of themselves, wishing him well and updating him on news from home.

Craig joined ETSA Utilities as an apprentice diesel mechanic in 2002, working at the Fleet Workshop at Angle Park, and became a TSW4 diesel mechanic in 2006. He will be back at work in May. We hope to share more details of his experiences in future editions of *Watt's Up*.

