

# Uplifting jungle week for bosses

By Stephen Ridgway



**D**efence public servants Carol Bowen and Gary Candish usually spend their time helping resolve work-place conflict at Defence Establishments in the NSW Region.

But in early January they shared an experience that was very different. They spent a week 8000kms from home in the jungles of Malaysia with the Australian Rifle Company Butterworth as part of Exercise Boss Lift.

All but four of the 117 soldiers were Reserves, and — as well as seeing for themselves the experience of jungle survival training — both negotiators talked to the Reserve soldiers about how they had negotiated their three-month leave of absence from their civilian employers.

"I was very impressed with what I saw," said Carol, the Dispute Resolution Practitioner for NSW. "It was a level of enthusiasm I haven't seen before, and I'm ex-Army myself!

"When talking to the employers at home, I always mention that they will be getting their employees back from their Reserve time as highly-trained professional people — hardworking and committed team players with leadership skills. It's what they learn as Reservists and they'll take that ethos back to their civilian work.

"But their civilian skills are also useful to the Army — it's a cross-pollination that benefits both sets of employers.

"The jungle survival training was very challenging — they have a knife and some water and they must survive 36 hours. But they all looked happy and interested — they definitely had a strong rapport despite the rudimentary and challenging conditions."

The jungle survival camp was also an eye-opening experience for colleague Gary Candish, the Defence Equity Coordinator for NSW.

"I had very little to do with Deployed Army Reservists until this trip, but seeing them in the jungle showed me they are hard core — I had thought they just spent their time having fun! Now I appreciate what they do and if the chips are down I'd like to have them beside me.

"Reservists bring experience from their life outside. They don't live in the Mess, they have their own family and social lives, they are different ages and bring different skills — one of the Reservists I spoke to was a strawberry farmer who does his soldiering when it's quiet on the farm — but it all comes together when they put their uniforms on.

"After this trip I'll definitely be recommending the Army Reserve to any bosses I meet — they are articulate, sharp, responsive — and they are also clean cut."

Of the 100,000 people in Australian uniform some 45,000 are Reserves. All are volunteers, and they have to volunteer again to serve overseas. In Australia they can also get involved in security at major events, and participate in disaster relief operations. Their bosses are compensated while they are away on duty.



**TOP:** Gary Candish checks out night vision goggles for size. **MIDDLE:** Meat is being smoked over a slow fire in the jungle survival camp. **BOTTOM:** Dispute Resolution Practitioner Carol Bowen in the jungles of Malaysia with the Australian Rifle Company Butterworth as part of Exercise Boss Lift.