

# Indigenous pride, national security and the Regional Force Surveillance Units

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been a longstanding part but much under-acknowledged element of the ADF. These first Australians have served with distinction from the Boer War to the modern Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns. Often, they served as single soldiers, and often without official recognition of their indigenous ethnicity. In World War 2, some indigenous units and sub-units were raised for domestic war service but with little real recognition of ethnicity or equality in service recognition. Nevertheless, indigenous men and women who served Australia did so with courage and tenacity, regardless of whether they were officially recognised as Australians.

Since those times, and particularly after then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised to the 'stolen generation' in February 2008, the speed of acceptance and inclusion of our first people and their numerous and distinct cultures into

contemporary mainstream society and the Australian military has seen lightning changes. Now, with numerous governmental campaigns underway, it is time to closer link the Regional Force Surveillance Units—the Pilbara Regiment, the North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE) and 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion Far North Queensland Regiment (51 FNQR)—to the indigenous population of Australia, not only in their operating regions but for all indigenous Australians.

It is also important to link their service in their own units with the national security of Australia. This article argues that these units should become metaphorically owned by all indigenous Australians by displaying their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbology and with an indigenous unit lineage to carry their own customs and traditions into the future, while making a significant mark on the protection of Australia's national security.



## Becoming Australian

Times and attitudes have changed, and reconciliation between the broader Australian society and the first Australians has now gained a level of success and tempo that many in both indigenous and non-indigenous communities never thought possible. For example, despite neither being recognised as Australians, but to differentiate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for administrative reasons, Queensland's *Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939* legally recognised Torres Strait Islanders as a separate indigenous race in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

Becoming 'Australian' commenced with the *Commonwealth Nationality and Citizen Act* of 1948 that gave citizenship to Australia's indigenous people but no right to vote.<sup>2</sup> The pathway to the right to vote began in 1962 when the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* was amended to allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders the right to vote in Federal elections.<sup>3</sup> However, it was not until 1967, in amending the Australian Constitution, that our society fully recognised our first Australians as part of the Australian population.<sup>4</sup>

## Indigenous war service to Australia

With the outbreak of World War 1, many young Australian men patriotically answered the call to arms, most often with a view for adventure, and enlisted in droves. This fervour and desire for adventure was not limited to the 'white man', as many young indigenous men also answered the call as they too sought the adventure promised by war. They tried to enlist despite the *Commonwealth Defence Act 1903* exempting 'persons who are not substantially of European origin or descent'.<sup>5</sup> The introduction of a universal military training scheme in 1911 also did little to change interpretations of legislation and subsequent military policies. Hence, both policies and attitudes made indigenous enlistment a challenge.

Despite these contemporary attitudes, in a dim light of recognition of the contribution that Australian indigenous people could play in the defence of northern Australia, Major W.O. Mansbridge of the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Gold-Fields Regiment)

suggested in the *Military Journal* of January 1912 that:

I beg to submit suggestions whereby his services could be utilized, and I am of the opinion that he would become a very useful ally in case of an invasion in those parts.<sup>6</sup>

Sadly, it appears that Major Manbridge's suggestions fell on deaf ears as there was little Australian appetite for inclusivity, particularly in the military, as the universal military training scheme of 1911 echoed the ethnicity sentiments of the *Commonwealth Defence Act 1903*. Ultimately, while all government military policies were not directly aimed at indigenous Australians, they—as the largest ethnically different group in Australia—suffered the consequences because of the lack of recognition of them as part of the Australian population.

Enlistment struggles aside, as Philippa Scarlett presents in her book *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers for the AIF: the Indigenous response to World War One*, indigenous men had been individual members of all Australian Light Horse Regiments and 60 of the 62 Australian Infantry Battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Imperial Force (AIF).<sup>7</sup> However, these were only the fighting arms of the Australian land element—there is little to no information on indigenous employment in the logistic elements of that force or the Navy.

Despite some indigenous men having the chance to serve Australia, they fought in units that were raised with the customs and traditions of British regiments, and those that had no lineage to Britain reflected the broader 'white' society of Australia. When indigenous soldiers came home, they disappeared back into their communities, the attitudes of 'white' Australia continued, the units disbanded, and ex-service associations took the mantle of returned veterans and unit commemorations.

As a result, many indigenous ex-soldiers were not around to march or commemorate, often finding themselves returned to their remote homelands; those who were living in towns were refused entry and service in bars and clubs, and were refused permission by local authorities to march on ANZAC day.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were not truly represented or commemorated as a formed fighting force,

rather only as a gap-fill in units that reflected 'white' Australian society and British Army lineage. They had no ex-service organisation or standing unit to call their own.

In the interim war years, there is very little information on the extent to which indigenous men continued in military service, suggesting there were few if any indigenous men serving in the land force or the newly formed RAAF. There is photographic evidence that the RAN employed some indigenous men in Far North Queensland, albeit in very limited numbers, notably aboard HMAS *Geranium* when it was engaged in hydrographic surveys of the Great Barrier Reef.<sup>9</sup>

As World War 2 loomed, and particularly after it commenced in September 1939, the spirit of adventure again gripped men of all ethnicities. Again, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men could only enlist as individuals in units of the military, all now bearing the lineage and battle honours of the AIF units—one step away from Britain but still not representative of the efforts of indigenous AIF soldiers.

It was not until 1941, when the war for Australia was taking a dark turn as Japanese forces had entered the war and were advancing south with great speed, that fear of invasion gripped

Australia and the government-of-the-day sought to strengthen the northern borders. Against this background, the acting Prime Minister of Australia, Arthur Fadden, announced in May 1941 that 'approval has been given in principle to the raising of one company of Torres Strait Islanders for service on Thursday Island for the duration of the war and twelve months after'.<sup>10</sup>

Thus Australia, for the first time in its military history, raised an indigenous majority-staffed military unit, the Torres Strait Independent Infantry Company. While largely manned by Torres Strait Islanders, although commanded by non-indigenous officers and sergeants, there were also some Aboriginal men on the unit establishment. On 1 March 1943, the unit was officially formed into an infantry battalion, titled the 'Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion'. Interestingly, a 1945 order, outlining the unit's war establishment, continued to reflect the 'non-Australian' status of indigenous personnel by differentiating between (white) 'Australian personnel' and 'Torres Strait personnel'.<sup>11</sup> The unit was disbanded with no fanfare in 1946.

After the establishment of the Torres Strait Independent Infantry Company, the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit was raised in Arnhem Land in February 1942 as a wholly



Aboriginal auxiliary unit. It was commanded by a RAAF Officer, Flight Lieutenant Donald Thomson, a pre-war anthropologist who had studied and lived with Aboriginal people in northern Australia. However, the unit was short-lived, being disbanded in April 1943.

It is important to note that none of the indigenous men of the unit were formally enlisted into the military or paid, receiving only three sticks of tobacco a week in remuneration. On being disbanded, its remaining members were transferred to the 2/1<sup>st</sup> North Australian Observer Unit, which had been raised in May 1942. Available information suggests that the unit was largely manned by white 'light horse' soldiers, with its indigenous members valued for acting in auxiliary roles and as guides.<sup>12</sup> The unit, which had a notable number of indigenous personnel but was not an indigenous-majority unit, was disbanded in March 1945.

By the close of World War 2, many of the indigenous ex-soldiers were to suffer the same fate of those who had served with honour in World War 1—lost in time by the war's end and often fading back into obscurity. The Australian Army's only-ever solely indigenous unit, the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion, despite active service in the coastal regions of Dutch New Guinea, had been written off the Australian Army's order of battle to become nothing more than a memory.

The major conflicts following World War 2, namely the Korean war and the Vietnam war, again saw indigenous soldiers serving as 'non-citizens' in individual units. These units all had links back to World War 1 and World War 2, carrying on the battle honours of white units and white history, but with no links to the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion, the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit or the Northern Australian Observer Unit.

## Regional Force Surveillance Units

It was not until the 1970s that, once again, out of national security fears of Indonesian military activity in northern Australia, the Australian Government sought to use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the defence of Australia, particularly as the Special Air Service Regiment

(SASR)—once charged with the responsibility of northern surveillance—was unable to fulfil that duty.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the Australian Army decided to form three regional force surveillance units, charged with conducting unconventional operations in northern Australia to ensure adequate surveillance and better national security.

### The Pilbara Regiment

Planned in the late 1970s to conduct unconventional military operations in north-west Australia, the Pilbara Regiment started as the 5<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company, before being upgraded to the Pilbara Regiment in December 1981.<sup>14</sup> Initially operating from Headquarters 5<sup>th</sup> Military District, it later moved to Campbell Barracks in Perth, with one platoon at Tom Price and one at Newman.

The establishing cadre was drawn from the 'special conditions' element of 28<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company, Royal West Australian Regiment (RWAR), which was the indigenous element, recruited under specific conditions that reflected the special conditions of service of indigenous regional recruits. This avenue of enlistment still exists, now named the Regional Force Surveillance List, which gives commanding officers the ability to waive a particular enlistment criterion.<sup>15</sup>

Notably, though, the history of the army units that grew the Pilbara Regiment did not reflect any indigenous nature; rather, they continued the battle honours of World War 1 and World War 2-related 'white' Australian Army units. Its antecedents were (arguably) the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Commando Squadron, a Victorian-raised World War 2 special operations unit, established in 1942 and disbanded in 1946, and the West Australian 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF, which was raised in 1915 and disbanded in 1919 before being re-raised and disbanded numerous times until settling as the 11/28<sup>th</sup> Battalion RWAR in 1987.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company title ultimately kept the unit organically West Australian by using the Military District numbering of 'five' but also largely kept the battle honours of the New Guinea and Borneo operations of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Commando Squadron in living memory.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, staffing the unit with a cadre from the 28<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company RWAR fed

the history of that unit into the fabric of the new regional force surveillance unit although, again, it was the honours of Gallipoli and the Western Front, and World War 2 operations in New Britain that were not forgotten and extended beyond that of the 11/28<sup>th</sup> Battalion RWAR.

The transformation of the unit from the 5<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company into the Pilbara Regiment occurred after a series of sporadic unit growth and training activities. The move of the headquarters element to Port Hedland and the formation there of a Support Platoon, along with participation in Exercise KANGAROO 1983, proved the unit as a regional surveillance force. Thus, on 26 January 1985, the unit officially became the Pilbara Regiment, with 'Australia day' being used to re-establish the unit, yet with no consideration of dates relevant to its indigenous personnel or the special considerations and nature of the unit. Further changes since 1985 have met Army needs rather than endeavouring to strengthen national security by tying the community closer to the Army by better utilising the unit's special enlistment criteria.

While many general observers would likely see the Pilbara Regiment as representative of and staffed by the indigenous peoples of the region, this is only partially correct. The Regiment is predominantly staffed by a Regular Army cadre of non-indigenous personnel, who hold all command and key positions. The unit has never had an indigenous commanding officer nor an officer commanding or company sergeant major of any of its squadrons. The unit's indigenous personnel rarely go beyond the rank of sergeant and usually hold little more than a patrol commander's position. While it is not being suggested that there is any deliberate limiting of advancement for indigenous personnel, the unit still operates much like the pre-1973 Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF), in which senior command and key positions were held by Australian-provided personnel.

## The North West Mobile Force

In line with the need to ensure a persistent northern military presence, the central unit in the network of surveillance units was named the North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE) on 1 July 1981. The unit derived from several World War

2 forebears, including the Darwin Mobile Force and the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit, although it most closely resembled and was given the history and insignia of the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Northern Australia Observer Unit. Again, however, despite the popular image that the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Northern Australia Observer Unit was an indigenous unit, NORFORCE was far from that stock.

Initially, NORFORCE was staffed with men from the disbanded 7<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company, an independent infantry company under command of Headquarters 7<sup>th</sup> Military District. The history of the 7<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company can arguably be traced to the Darwin Infantry Battalion, which in late 1941 was designated the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion Australian Military Forces, a militia battalion that took the customs and traditions of the World War 1-origin 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF.

Later, the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion, which was raised and located in Sydney, became completely divorced of its Darwin history, being re-raised in 1966 as the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal New South Wales Regiment (RNSWR). In 1971, it was amalgamated with another Sydney-based battalion, the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion, to become the 1/19<sup>th</sup> Battalion RNSWR, carrying the battle honours of both World War 1 and World War 2 service, including Darwin. Thus, one of the forebears of NORFORCE carried no link to indigenous servicemen nor incorporated any customs or traditions of the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit, a majority manned Aboriginal auxiliary unit tasked with an early warning mission, was disbanded in April 1943, with some of its indigenous personnel absorbed into the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Northern Australia Observer Unit. Regardless of the unique nature of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit—and its majority manning of indigenous personnel—the short-lived unit created no customs or traditions or even insignia. On being taken onto the auxiliary strength of the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Northern Australia Observer Unit, the history and operations of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit seemingly vanished. It was not until 1992 that those who had served in the unit were recognised by the Australian Government with World War 2 service medals and pay.



The establishment of the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Northern Australia Observer Unit came about at the suggestion of W.E.H. Stanner (later Major), an anthropologist with a significant knowledge of northern Australia and a staff member in the office of the Minister for the Army. He was interviewed by Major General Herring, General Officer Commanding Northern Territory Force on the feasibility of a surveillance, reconnaissance and scouting force within the region, which resulted in the decision in May 1942 to establish the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Northern Territory Observer Unit as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF.<sup>17</sup>

Once formed, the unit was established along the lines of a traditional Australian Light Horse unit, preferring horses over vehicles and seeking volunteers with horsemanship skills, previous 'bush' experience and a willingness to undertake arduous duties in the north of Australia. Accordingly, many of the volunteers came from pre-war Light Horse Regiments and those who had lived in the Northern Territory for many years. Many of these men were not indigenous, and the majority of roles for indigenous men and women were supporting tasks, such as horse-breaking, cooking and tracking on long-range patrols.

Later, towards the end of 1943, the unit became dismounted, and most of its personnel were reposted and its field companies disbanded. The much leaner unit continued more limited operations until March 1945, when it was disbanded. In the years between 1945 and 1981, therefore, there was no on-ground military surveillance in the region, other than periodic surveillance patrols and exercises by the SASR.

Accordingly, it can be said that the building blocks of NORFORCE were not based on significant or historical indigenous traditions or legacy. Once raised, the modern NORFORCE has been closely linked with local indigenous communities. However, like the Pilbara Regiment, NORFORCE has never had an indigenous commanding officer, officer commanding or company sergeant major, although the Australian Army's website notes that 'Australian Aboriginal soldiers form 60 per cent of NORFORCE personnel'.<sup>18</sup>

## 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment

Much like its two sister battalions in the north of Australia, the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment (51 FNQR) was envisaged to fill the need for both a persistent military presence in the Torres Strait and to fill the void of regional surveillance following the cessation of that role by the SASR.

Raised as the last of the three RFSUs, 51 FNQR has no indigenous history. The 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion AIF was raised in Egypt in early 1916 for service on the Western Front. Staffed from men of the West Australian 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the new unit carried the battle honours of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion's Boer war service and from World War 1, where the unit fought in the well-known battles at Mouquet Farm, Messines, Polygon Wood and Villers-Bretonneux.<sup>19</sup>

Following the cessation of hostilities, the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion AIF was disbanded in May 1919. It was reinstated on the Army's order of battle in 1921, when it was moved briefly to West Australia, then NSW, before finally being established on 1 October 1936 as the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion FNQR, located in Cairns and with the lineage of the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion AIF. During World War 2, the unit served as a militia unit, later seeing active service in New Guinea as the 31<sup>st</sup>/51<sup>st</sup> Battalion. It also saw action in the Solomon Islands as an AIF battalion, experiencing particularly heavy fighting at Tsimba Ridge and Porton Plantation on Bougainville Island. The unit was disbanded on 4 July 1946.

The unit was again raised in Cairns in 1950, amalgamating in later years with 31<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Battalions to become the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment (RQR), before again becoming 51 FNQR, before settling in 1976 as the 51<sup>st</sup> Independent Rifle Company RQR. All through the turbulent life of the post-war reorganisations, the unit carried the colours and traditions of the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion AIF.

In 1985, in line with the desire to form the RFSUs, the 51<sup>st</sup> Independent Rifle Company RQR once again became 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion FNQR, with a new unconventional surveillance task as the third of the three RFSUs. However, the unit has no indigenous wartime history and its link

with the Cairns region was as a World War 2 militia battalion. It is also fair to contend that the unit very likely had no interaction with the indigenous population of Far North Queensland as that mantle had been taken by the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion.

Following the battalion's reformation as a RFSU, it used local recruitment to capitalise on the knowledge of both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in the region to enhance its ability to conduct its mission. However, the unit's headquarters, located in Cairns, is housed in Porton Barracks, named after the significant battle involving the 31<sup>st</sup>/51<sup>st</sup> Battalion AIF on Bougainville in 1944. In 2016, 51 FNQR celebrated its World War 1 history at Villers-Bretonneux and paraded its colours on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. There was no representation of the unit's indigenous contribution in World War 2 or during the modern period.

It can reasonably be argued, therefore, that the unit does not adequately represent the indigenous population of the region and commemorates only its non-indigenous wartime history. 51 FNQR, like its sister battalions, has never had an indigenous commanding officer, officer commanding or company sergeant major. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel form approximately 30 per cent of the rank and file, which is certainly not representative of the indigenous population of Far North Queensland.<sup>20</sup>

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbology

A symbol is generally defined as a thing or representation that bears significant meaning to a group. Historically, each nation, person and race holds a symbol near and dear to their identity; in this circumstance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders hold the flag of each race as important to their culture.

The Aboriginal flag, designed in 1971 and granted the status of a flag of Australia under the *Flags Act 1953* on 14 July 1995, has become a nationally recognisable symbol for the Aboriginal people of Australia.<sup>21</sup> The symbol, which can variously be seen as a flag on Australian Government flagpoles, graffiti on a wall, or as a tattoo

on the arm of both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, has gained a significant position in both the Australian Government's policy decisions on Australian symbology and for the Aboriginal people of Australia.

The Torres Strait Islander flag, designed and recognised by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in 1992, was also granted the status of a flag of Australia under the *Flags Act 1953* on 14 July 1995.<sup>22</sup> While not as universally recognised as the Aboriginal flag, it nevertheless holds significant importance to the people of the Torres Strait and is a permanent feature in all Australian state and federal institutions.

Ultimately, both these flags are part of a series of symbols, language, culture and dance of Australia's indigenous peoples. Hence, it is important that they are used in a manner that connects institutions to their respective race.

## Indigenous community ownership of the RFSUs

Despite the demonstrated non-indigenous histories of the three RFSUs, there is certainly an element of indigenous community 'buy in' to them notwithstanding that, since their formation in the 1980s, the units have quintessentially been 'colonial' in their unit composition. For its part, the ADF does not discriminate by race and many an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander has held a majority of ranks within the ADF, albeit none has ever been promoted beyond the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

In an effort to change the status quo and the future of indigenous service, the Chief of Army issued a directive in November 2008 titled 'Army Indigenous Strategy', addressing the recruitment and retention of indigenous personnel.<sup>23</sup> However, although this document has been revised biennially, with the latest revision dated June 2014, it has not captured the need to reflect indigenous command and control of the RFSUs.

Also, given the geographic locations of the three RFSUs and the available recruiting pool (in addition to the ability to waive certain enlistment requirements), it would certainly be wise to take

every step to bring each unit closer to the community. This could be achieved by the specific targeting of prospective leaders for key positions within the RFSUs. For example, recruiting prominent indigenous individuals, such as Johnathan Thurston, captain of the North Queensland Cowboys, or Adam Giles, former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, to senior leadership positions within the RFSUs, would have significant cultural dividends.

Another suggestion would be to employ the RFSUs within the Australian Special Operations Command, which is beyond the scope of this article but perhaps worthy of consideration, especially given the history of the SASR in regional surveillance. These and other options—such as making greater strategic use of the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program to link indigenous communities to the RFSUs—would certainly strengthen community pride and interconnectivity with the Army and the Australian Government more broadly.

## Aboriginal ownership

Given the locations of the Pilbara Regiment and NORFORCE, one such symbolic method of Aboriginal community ownership would be to allow these two units to wear the Aboriginal flag as a feature of identity on their Army uniform. Much like soldiers in the modern-day PNGDF wear the PNG flag on the left arm of their uniform and the national symbol, the Kumul, as a patch on their left breast, these units could wear the Australian flag on their left arm and the Aboriginal flag as a patch on their right breast (symbolically close to the heart and thus a person's individual worth and reason for being). Such symbology, together perhaps with a newly designed hat badge, would create an instant rapport with the entire Aboriginal races of Australia, and symbolically give an 'air' of Aboriginal ownership.

## Torres Strait Islander ownership

Reorganising 51 FNQR to better reflect the region's indigenous wartime history is as simple as it is complicated. The easy part is that the Chief of Army presumably could recommend to the Minister for Defence his approval of an instrument to disband 51 FNQR and replace it with a re-raised Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion.

The major complication is that any proposal to disband 51 FNQR would likely attract considerable opposition from veteran groups associated with its 2<sup>nd</sup> Division history.

However, disbanding 51 FNQR is not a new proposition. Its antecedents have been disbanded and re-raised several times over the past 100 years. Moreover, using a special date, such as the centenary of the end of World War 1, could provide a timely opportunity to disband the unit and lay up its colours with dignity. Subsequently reforming the unit on a day of significant cultural importance and linking it with the history of Australia's only majority indigenously staffed unit would undoubtedly be invaluable in forging much closer ties and bonds between the unit and the local community.

As suggested in the previous section, the targeted recruitment of high-profile indigenous Torres Strait Islanders for leadership positions, in addition to the wearing of Torres Strait Islander symbology, all wrapped in the envelope of a link to the World War 2 history of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion, would substantially enhance unit morale and effectiveness.

## Conclusion

In closing, this article is not about significantly changing the status quo or excluding non-indigenous soldiers from serving in an RFSU. It is about highlighting the histories of the RFSUs that were largely born of policies from a period when indigenous concerns did not sit highly in the considerations of government and Army's policy-makers.

The article has also sought to present a number of alternatives and suggestions, some of which are contentious and impact on long-established customs and traditions of the Army. However, the status quo, while often comfortable, is not necessarily right. The Chief of Army's indigenous strategy directive is very welcome but only goes part of the way. The next step would be to reform the RFSUs to become a source of indigenous community pride and ownership. Providing a more inclusive connection between Australia's indigenous population and the Army as a national institution should also improve the operational effectiveness of these units.

Warrant Officer Class Two Aaron Waddell enlisted in the Australian Army Reserve in 1987, serving in the Townsville-based 31<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Queensland Regiment. He later joined the Australian Regular Army in 1989, serving in the 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment until transferring to the Army Intelligence Corps in 1991. He has since served in various Intelligence Corps postings, and as an instructor at the 1<sup>st</sup> Recruit Training Battalion and later the Royal Military College, Duntroon. Warrant Officer Waddell has a Master of National Security Policy (with merit) from the Australian National University.

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