

## Media Release No 432

For Release 22 February 2012

### Young Torres Strait women develop leadership skills

Two young Torres Strait women, Carmen Tapau and Rellis Petrou, were the successful applicants for the emerging young leader's course sponsored by the Torres Strait Regional Authority and run by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

The December course was an intensive 17 day adventure packed program for young Indigenous people aged 18 to 25 years-old.

Petrou said she embarked on a journey with nine strangers from around Australia who became her friends and family for 14 days. "The course was mind blowing.

"In 14 days we did team building activities, individual activities to help us personally, leadership skills, camping, caving, hiking and much, much more.

"I was challenged mentally and physically and pushed right out of my comfort zone.

"Coming from the tropics the weather was a dilemma for me as it was hot during the day and freezing during the night and don't get me started with the rain," Petrou said.

"One of my low points during my time in the bush was waking up at 5:30am one morning after bush bashing in the rain the day before and putting on my wet hiking clothes in the freezing cold.

"It was just an experience that you get through and will always be with you to laugh about and that is exactly what the team did."

She said one of the highlights was the hike even though it was hard at times.

"I can't explain the feeling when we arrived at our camp site every day after walking 8 to 10 kilometres through rough terrain, up and down mountains and hills, through swamps and through valleys.

"The feeling was like wow we've made it..... bring on tomorrow."

"Every day was a different experience and there was never a dull moment and it was definitely an experience I will never forget."

Petrou said she gained self confidence from the course, learned how to work in a team and developed leadership skills.

"I can now apply these skills in my everyday life.

"I encourage everyone with an interest in leadership to apply for the next intake as this experience will definitely help you in your future endeavours.

"Don't be afraid to try something new or try something that you fear or think you can't do because this course teaches you to punch fear right in the face."

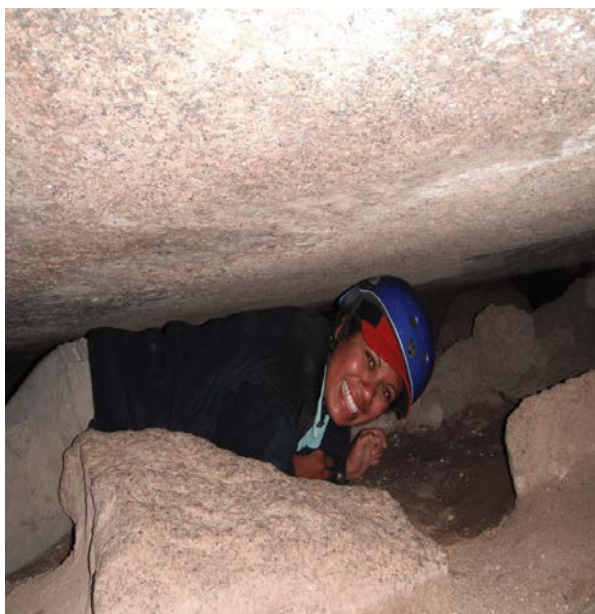
TSRA chairperson, John (Toshie) Kris, said both Carmen and Rellis indicated they would recommend the leadership course to others.

"Those recommendations are a strong sign of its impact and effectiveness.

"The greatest strength of the program is in the exposure to different natural environments, people and situations and the opportunity to develop independence and confidence."

Mr Kris said planning was now underway to offer five fully sponsored places in this year's Australian Rural Leadership Foundation course.

He said the sponsored places would be available later this year for future Indigenous leaders from Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area communities.



(High resolution JPEG available) Caption: Caving was just one of the challenges facing Rellis Petrou during a young leader's course sponsored by the Torres Strait Regional Authority and run by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

**Contact: TSRA Communications Coordinator, Ken Orr, (07) 4069 0700**