

ADF Education

MEET A GRADUATE OF THE ADF SPONSORED UNDERGRADUATE SCHEME

MARDI RICHARDS

NAVY LEGAL OFFICER

The chance to get paid while completing her legal degree and knowing there was a guaranteed job at the end, definitely played a part in Lieutenant Mardi Richards decision to join the Navy.

Mardi joined the Royal Australian Navy in 2004 as an Undergraduate Legal Officer, Mardi says.

"During my studies I attended training nights on aspects of Military, International and Humanitarian Law, held by the Defence Legal Panel, consisting of reservist Legal Officers," she says.

"I was also provided with basic Naval training, which included a week on a patrol boat apprehending illegal fishermen off Darwin's coast."

Mardi graduated from Flinders University in 2006 with a Bachelor of Laws & Legal Practice/Behavioural Science, she says.

Every Naval Officer entering the service has to complete the 22-week New Entry Officer's Course (NEOC) at the Royal Australian Naval College in Jervis Bay, NSW. This was a valuable introduction to Navy life for Mardi.

"Our training included a four-week sea deployment, extensive naval leadership and physical training, drill and, my personal favourite, pistol shooting as part of our small arms training."

The Navy's divisional system ensures that all personnel have a formal support network available to assist them throughout their careers. The divisional system and additional mentoring provided to Navy Legal Officers have been integral in helping Mardi to navigate her career.

"The mentoring system enables junior legal officers to discuss their careers and seek advice from more senior officers. They also advocate on our behalf for positions and opportunities. It's a really great system, especially when you are starting out, as the system can be quite daunting," she says.

Providing young lawyers with the right training and placing them in positions of responsibility early in their careers is something the Navy prides itself on.



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"As part of my ongoing training, I got to spend a week with Border Protection Command which involved attending a Maritime Security (Constabulary) Operations Course and visiting the new Armidale Class Patrol Boats in Darwin."

"In addition to the military law and other training I will continue to receive, I will soon begin a Masters degree sponsored by Navy. This is something that all Defence Legal Officers are encouraged to complete as part of their career development," she says.

"As a Legal Officer in the Navy, there are opportunities to serve in Australia, at sea and abroad. The experiences and opportunities available to lawyers in the Royal Australian Navy are unique and, in my view, an exciting alternative to those offered in commercial law," Mardi says.

There are over 213 different jobs available, including legal offices, in the Navy, Army and Air Force.