

Real connections and support at Swinburne helping Tony succeed



Swinburne University of Technology's Moondani Toombadool Centre has helped Bachelor of Nursing student Tony Ryder find cultural connection and community 3000km from home.

When Tony Ryder made the 3000km trip from his home in the northern goldfields of Western Australia to further his career with a Bachelor of Nursing in Victoria, his choice of university became clear early on. Within a day of emailing Swinburne University of Technology, the proud Noongar Yamatji man was contacted by the Moondani Toombadool Centre's Indigenous Student Services team to arrange campus tours, make introductions to heads of departments, and provide information about tutoring and scholarships. "The team has been the most help with everything to do with my experience at university," Tony said. "I am the first one to go to university in my immediate family, so was unsure of pretty much everything. [The Moondani Toombadool Centre team] organised meetings so that I could enrol in classes, organised accommodation, paying fees and various other things that pop up." Established in 2018, the Moondani Toombadool Centre is responsible for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters at Swinburne, including Indigenous student support and success services, teaching and learning, research, staff, culture, engagement and governance. Moondani Toombadool means 'embracing teaching and learning' in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri People. The Moondani Toombadool Centre is committed to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and knowledges across the institution as foundations on which Swinburne leads educational change. "I wouldn't have been able to get this far in my degree if it wasn't for Moondani Toombadool," Tony said. "I sent out expressions of interest for studying when I first moved over to Melbourne and Swinburne was the only one who got back to me the same day." Swinburne is a dual sector university, offering vocational education courses, like diplomas and certificates, alongside higher education courses like bachelor and

postgraduate degrees. This creates opportunities for direct pathways to further study. For Tony, this meant leveraging his skills and experience as a Diploma of Nursing graduate to fast-track direct entry to the second year of a Bachelor of Nursing. Like all Swinburne degrees, Tony is 'learning by doing' with a focus on hands-on learning and industry connections.

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"My favourite part of my studies are the simulation classes," Tony said. "We are in smaller groups and get to practice our skills on breathing, eye moving dummies. "They can talk and are operated by nurses who are working within hospitals in Melbourne, so we can get insight from professionals in the industry." Building a support system 3000km from home and family, while navigating studies, placements and work can be difficult. But the Moondani Toombadool Centre prides itself on helping to create real connections and strong

relationships with mob studying at Swinburne. "There is an Indigenous eco-space, the Aunty Dot Peters AM Flowering Grasslands, filled with plants that were here pre colonisation, as well as yarning spaces like the Indigenous Learning Circles, and lots of art all around campus," Tony said. "The Moondani Toombadool Centre also organises a lot of social gatherings like actively participate in the Indigenous Uni games, On Country workshops and outings, and dinners. "It gives you a sense of community in an unfamiliar space like university." After completing his degree, Tony is looking forward to putting his skills and experience to use in rural and regional Australia, and eventually closer to home. "I would like to continue working in the community space maybe after doing a grad year at a regional or rural hospital," he said. "I would like to gain experience maybe do some secondment work and get to see more of Australia before I head back to WA to be with mob." Tony encourages other Indigenous students interested in beginning their higher education journey to strongly consider Swinburne. "Start by flicking an email to the Indigenous Student Services team here at Moondani Toombadool," he said. "They will go above and beyond to help you out. Come and check out Swinburne's Open Day too – it is a great, well-sized and well-located campus, and has a train station in the middle of it for easy access." With the Moondani Toombadool Centre walking alongside them throughout their journey at Swinburne, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students like Tony are set up for positive and successful individual and community outcomes. **Contact the team at: indigenoustudents@swinburne.edu.au for a friendly yarn about how the team can help you to achieve your study and career goals.**