Swinburne University: Establishing the Moondani Toombadool Centre and the impact on Indigenous student engagement
Vicky Peters, Cyan Earnshaw, Joel Boojers & Lydia Bisset, Swinburne University of Technology

Indigenous students’ success in higher education is largely dependent on ensuring that it’s a quality experience and providing adequate supports (Australian Government, 2011 p.7). In order to succeed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students need access to a range of social, financial and academic support (Australian Government Department of Education, 2012, p.7) and Indigenous Education Centre’s can play an important role in this.

The establishment of the Moondani Toombadool Centre (MTC), meaning ‘embracing teaching and learning’ in the local Woiwurrung language, in June 2018 and the establishment of the Indigenous Student Services team in 2019 have made a positive impact on student engagement through establishing a student only space and providing a comprehensive suite of services to the very diverse student population of Higher Education, Vocational Education and Online students. The MTC has also seen a significant increase in staff numbers and student enrolments in a very short time.

Swinburne’s Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan has been an important mechanism to gain buy-in at every level of the University to establish the Moondani Toombadool Centre and is vitally important to gain support from all areas of the University. The University also needs to consider an ideal funding environment in order for the centre to continue to thrive and succeed.

References

Presenters
Vicky Peters, Swinburne University of Technology

Vicky Peters is a Wurundjeri, Yorta Yorta descendant, recently appointed as Manager of Indigenous Student Services for the Moondani Toombadool Centre at Swinburne University of Technology. Vicky is an experienced Indigenous Students Services Manager and currently leads a team of three responsible for the attraction, retention and success of Indigenous students in Higher Education, VET and Online at Swinburne.

Vicky originally trained in healthcare and has worked for many years in remote Aboriginal communities in Cape York. This experience highlighted that education has the most transformative impact to change lives and redress disadvantage. Upon her return to Melbourne, Vicky secured a position with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, DEECD with the Aboriginal education unit and successfully completed a Graduate Certificate in Career Education & Development. She has now held positions with Murrup Barack Institute for Indigenous Development at The University of Melbourne, The Office of Indigenous Strategy and Education at La Trobe University and currently the Moondani Toombadool Centre at Swinburne University.

Cyan Earnshaw, Swinburne University of Technology

Cyan Earnshaw is a proud Larrakia, Wardman and Karrajari woman. Cyan is passionate about elevating the Indigenous community through education and self-improvement.

Cyan has worked in Indigenous support in the Higher Education section for many years, previously in the position of Indigenous Liaison Officer at the Ngarara Willim Centre at RMIT University before securing the role of Indigenous Student Advisor in the Moondani Toombadool Centre.

Joel Boojers, Swinburne University of Technology

Joel Boojers is a Woppaburra (Keppel Islands) and Butchulla (Fraser Island) descendant from Queensland, Australia. Joel also has links to New Zealand having lived in Matarangi in his early years with his Grandfather and Mother who were both born in Auckland. Joel has held the position of Indigenous Student Advisor at Swinburne University of Technology since January 2017 and has contributed towards the shaping and growth of the Indigenous Student Services team. Joel has led and worked with the team on key engagement activities to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Swinburne are connected, valued and part of a strong and visible community.

Joel has also previously worked as a Primary School Teacher for Brisbane Catholic Education and has held roles within the Department of Veteran’s Affairs and various Queensland schools advancing awareness of Indigenous culture and teaching, mentoring and fostering strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, youth and families.

Lydia Bisset, Swinburne University of Technology

Lydia is a proud Palawa woman from Northern Tasmania. Lydia began working in the Moondani Toombadool Centre at the start of 2010 and has previously worked in student services since 2017. Lydia is completing Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) studies through Swinburne Online and loves to explore the outdoors in her spare time.