

THE UTOPIAN

2020 EDITION | SEMESTER 1

Together at Tommy

The Utopian

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Designer
Nick Sweet

Editor
Robyn Birkin

Photography
Jamie Brown
EyeCandy Australia
Other Students and Staff

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Cover Image: Fresher, Carla Pieroni with one of 2020's highest commodities, hand sanitiser

Please direct all correspondence to:

The Editor
St Thomas More College
48 Mounts Bay Road
Crawley, Western Australia 6009

T + 61 8 9386 0109
E r.birkin@stmc.uwa.edu.au

HEAD OF COLLEGE



As I write this piece for the Semester 1, 2020 Utopian, the Corona Virus Disease – that was first identified in late 2019 (COVID-19), has reportedly infected 19 million people worldwide and taken 700,000 lives. Few in living memory have had to deal with the implications of a pandemic like COVID-19.

I could not be more proud of the resilience, tenacity and focus that has been displayed by our current Collegians. As the media frenzy fuelled generalised anxiety amongst a population that was being “locked down” and was seeing a new world evolving, our students stood in solidarity with one another and their College. As universities rapidly changed to an online delivery mode, students had to be more self-disciplined than ever. The content, delivery mode, and methods of assessment all underwent revolutionary changes. There is no doubt that the resourcefulness that students have demonstrated at this time will be keenly sought after by future employers.

The virus started to affect the College in late January/early February as some of our Chinese students started to arrive back in Australia with the requirement that they undergo 14 days of self-isolation. The rules on our national border and Western Australian regional borders evolved rapidly and by late March/early April had peaked. Many international students had been called back to their home countries, while many regional West Australians chose to be at home with family during most uncertain times.

Protocols for hygiene, reducing risk and maintaining good mental health were all put in place and despite the natural energy of young adults, our students were superb at complying in order to keep one another safe.

Staff and students worked together to achieve a monumental outcome, complementing the great work done by the broader community in Western Australia and now we are enjoying some freedoms that we thought would never come back so soon.

We are yet to analyse local results but certainly the information coming from several east coast colleges indicates clearly that those who remained at college during this critical COVID period achieved better in their Semester 1 examinations. The academic support, both formal and informal, along with the ability to maintain connection with friends have been noted as key factors by many.

While I hope that none of us have to experience a pandemic of this nature ever again, I am buoyed by the human spirit that has been evident in the unity shown amongst our students and I am confident that the road to recovery will be led by intelligent, optimistic, and empathetic young people. I believe the myth of this generation being all about self has been busted – at least at Tommy!

*Tom Mitchell
Head of College*





WORD FROM THE DEPUTY

Well that escalated quickly!

We entered O'Week knowing that the virus was a possibility but hoping and praying that it would not come our way. The loss of so many of our international residents who were called back home was a devastating blow not only for them but for our domestic residents who would not have the same interactions in their first year at College.

As the virus progressed, our numbers continued to fall as most parents wanted their children safe at home with them. We did however still have around half our full cohort still in College and so we needed to be creative in our ideas to not only keep them safe but to also ensure they were still having some sort of College experience.

2020 will be a year we never forget. The 20 stories from 20 residents is a great memorial to an experience we hope we never have to endure again but also showcases the awesome tenacity and resilience that our wonderful Tommy residents have shown through this historic event.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge just how hard our Resident Advisors have worked during this time to safeguard the mental and emotional welfare of our students, continually checking in on them and preparing numerous initiatives to help our students remain connected during uncertain times. Although our usual events were postponed, our Student Club Committee and staff are also to be commended for the effort they put in to help students maintain social connection and wellness during this time.

These groups have now been working frantically to ensure that both our Freshers and Returners have the opportunity to make up for lost time, preparing a full social, personal and professional development calendar

This includes additional sporting competitions, a full Career's Week, Tommy More NAIDOC Week and Student Club Committee Events that were not possible in Semester 1, being added to the Semester 2 calendar.

Although this year has thrown us a curveball, I've been impressed with the maturity our students have shown, their camaraderie and 'one for all' attitude and resilience. I am proud of each and every one of you

*Rebecca Wood
Deputy Head of College*





FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY

Within an instant, our entire country went into lockdown. Our state border closed. International travel was cancelled and the entire world came to a standstill because of one tiny virus. So tiny, it is invisible to the eye, but powerful and deadly nonetheless.

Although we are now accustomed to social distancing, it felt strange that such a tiny virus could change our behaviour so dramatically and the way in which we relate to one another. No more handshakes. No more hugs as we welcome our close friends and family.

Over 10 weeks, I would stay at home and isolate myself, from my friends, loved ones and also with my parishioners. Mass became a totally different experience. Rather than celebrating publicly in the Chapel, I had to say Mass at home, by myself.

I often look at the positive side of whatever happens in my life, be it a good or a bad experience or even something that I may consider as a misfortune and even painful experiences. I always believe that from every experience, good or bad, I can still learn or make something out of it, so I took this approach and applied it over my time in lockdown.

At home for the best part of the last 10 weeks, I considered how I would spend my time, since I was not able to go to work. So the idea came to my mind that I would put aside a few hours each day and enter solitude; a time where I could be still and be alone with God in his presence. Such experiences can be very important for your spiritual development. It felt it was like a divine suggestion from God.

Therefore, each day, during lockdown, I had an opportunity to reflect, to pray and to meditate. It enabled me to enter in communion with God, who is the source of my strength, my well-being and my own happiness.

During my Covid-19 period of self-isolation, I read something which I found quite interesting, providing food for thought and reflection. The philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote: "I have discovered that all the unhappiness of human beings arises from one single fact, in that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber." [1] Pascal wrote those words in 1670, but they are applicable today.

We fill our lives with distractions - social media, television, music, computer games - and assume we are trying to avoid boredom. But often our diversions are rooted in a fear of solitude.

By avoiding solitude, though, we are missing out on opportunities for deeper communion with God. Solitude is the discipline that calls us to consciously pull away from everything else in our lives, including the company of other people, for the purpose of giving our full and undivided attention to God. The silver lining of self-isolation was the opportunity I received to deepen my relationship with God and enter the solitude I needed for the next level of my spiritual growth.

*Reverend Father Peter Tran
College Chaplain*

[1] . Blaise Pascal, *Thoughts* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

2019 CAMBODIA COLLABORATION

With more than 40 applications to attend the annual Cambodia Collaboration, it is clear that this annual trip (although now postponed for 2020) has become a life-changing experience for our students. Here are some of their reflections from the 2019 November trip.

“It’s a trip that you can’t really describe in words because so much happened. Not only getting to see and play with the kids was amazing but also seeing how much time the volunteers/teachers/workers at the centre and house work tirelessly to model positivity and hope to the kids.”

Rebecca Golder

“It was far more humbling than I expected. It taught me that although I am not a selfish person, I couldn’t go wrong with a little more humility. It was far more an emotional experience than a physical one.”

Grace Bowdidge

“I learnt that, no matter what happens to me in life, I can get through it. This was taught to me by the children that we got to see. These kids have been through Dante’s Circles of Hell and managed to come out with a smile on their faces. I wish to bring this experience to all my challenges in life.”

Lachie McLean

“In Australia we take advantage of so many things that we consider to be necessities in life, such as having four walls and beds to sleep on and clean running water. There are billions of people surviving everyday and working incredibly hard who have much less.”

Olivia Hunt

“It was incredible, the entire experience was mind blowing and so much fun. I learned a lot about how important it is to have support to help you through life.”

Casey Shields

“It seemed like a once in a life time opportunity. Students who had gone before spoke of the humbling and eye-opening experience very positively, and the different way of living over there was incomparable. I came away with a new appreciation for life’s basic necessities such as running water and a roof overhead because some are not so lucky.”

Jazmin Clarke





Tommy More Market

The annual Tommy More Market snuck in right at the beginning of social distancing measures. Last year, the inaugural Market raised more than \$2,500 and the College was pleased to this year, nearly double that amount with \$4,600 making its way to the Arrupe Centre and Lidy House in Cambodia.

This figure could not have been raised without the generous support of student, alumni, the Chapel community and wider friends and family of St Thomas More College.... along with the sunny weather!

With our 2020 Eddie Rice Camps Quiz Night postponed, along with our annual Cambodia Collaboration fundraising trip, these funds have been needed more than ever, with the young students in Cambodia still needing the same (if not more) care, support and education, so it was reaffirming, especially now, that we achieved such a result.

Stalls included an in-demand plant stall (with a rivalry between Tom Mitchell and student, Rhys Landwehr, for who could donate the most plants), only trumped by the wine raffle, which included a large number of bottles donated by our valued alumni. There was also our large op shop, an art stall (with stunning art works by Emily Broadhurst), a bake sale (run by our Chapel Community), sausage sizzle, hot chips, games and activities, face painting, Indigenous arts and also fresh flowers.

The market was also generously supported by our corporate sponsors, which included Chartwells Catering, Prestige Plumbing & Gas and Incub8. Thank you for your contributions.

Preparations are already underway for the 2021 event, which we anticipate will once again surpass previous figures.

We hope to see as many alumni, family and friends attend the College for the 2021 Market (pending world events) and show your support and connection to Tommy More. Bring your nieces, nephews, sons, daughters and grandchildren, for this family-friendly event, currently pencilled in for Sunday 7 March, from 10.00am - 2.00pm. We hope you'll save the date and visit us then!





17th Feb



21st Feb



13th Mar

It started like any other year...

The College was abuzz at the start of the year, with a full house and many excited students about to hit our doorstep. However, Tommy More became aware that all was not normal in early February when many of our Chinese students experienced difficulty entering the country. Although some students had remained in Perth during the Christmas break or returned early and others were able to fly into Perth through other destinations, experiencing multiple periods of quarantine on the way through, we were saddened that so many of our students were unable to return.

Conversly, at the time on the domestic front, all appeared to be business as usual. Once again, the Student Club Committee organised a first-class Orientation Week. Time after time, our students comment that this has been one of their most memorable experiences during their time at Tommy More.

In early March the Tommy More Market for Cambodia went off without a hitch and the College raised more than \$4,600 for Lidy House and the Arrupe Centre. Unlike last year, the weather was perfect and a large number of students put their hand up to volunteer.

Our one and only 2020 sporting event in Semester 1, the Cross Country Run, saw Tommy More achieve 2nd place for the ladies and 3rd for mens, but it was shortly after that time when Western Australia

joined lockdown. As Tom and some of our students explain, St Thomas More College remained open, swiftly implementing rigorous social distancing procedures, part of which included offering some students the opportunity to travel home to be with their families.

Many of our international students from other locations were also called home by their Governments and families, and whilst many travelled home, many also remained on campus.

Both the staff and the student leadership groups worked hard to ensure that students received opportunities whilst on campus (and at home) to remain connected and supported throughout the unprecedented changes to their routines, as well as focused (as well as can be expected) on their studies.

The recollections and thoughts of 20 of our students, from local and international, some who stayed and some who returned home, both Returners and Freshers, can be found on the following pages, as a somewhat time capsule edition of this *Utopian*.

This represents just some of the very unique range of events, initiatives, experiences, thoughts and shifts of our students in the first half of this year. There are indeed, many more, but we are sure you'll find this a fascinating insight into this very unique year at St Thomas More College.





20 in 20

20 students share what living at Tommy has been like so far in 2020

I believe this is a really special year for everyone. It feels like I've been in self-isolation for about half a year now (I've now self-isolated three times). How crazy that laying in bed all day could be the best thing you can do to keep yourself and others safe. It's also the only thing you can do for society.

2020 has been really different to last year. Travelling to lectures was replaced with watching Zoom in my own room. It's quite challenging to study at home by yourself... but good to eat your dinner whilst attending a lecture! I hope we are back to normal soon.

Haochen Zhao

In the age of social distancing and toilet paper restrictions, Semester 1 was unique to say the least. The transition to online university meant fuel money expenditure was replaced with online shopping, countless hours were put into kicking the footy on the quad, and I refined my skills on the pool table.

In March I said goodbye to my hair for the World's Greatest Shave. It coincided with the beginning of lockdown, so not many people got to see my baldness - one positive to come out of the situation.

With gyms closed and no sport, many of us turned to running to keep fit. Three times a week a group of us would race around King's Park or do a beep test in the quad. It served as a good outlet and became routine. Once exam season came around it took a back seat, and I wonder if the running club will ever return to its glory days.

Like many others, my motivation to study took a hit with the prospect of open book exams and ungraded passes. Stress levels were low, and not much knowledge was actually put to memory. Trying to learn how to manipulate someone's spine virtually was also just silly.

Tommy was quiet, with many residents returning home to live out their isolation and sometimes, going to the dining hall was the most eventful part of the day. The salad bar had been shut down, but the pre-made caesar salad was life changing – a visceral experience I will never forget.

Like all things, iso-life became normal in our little bubble, and it will take some readjusting to return to pre-coronavirus reality. Still being able to see your mates every day meant it didn't feel like isolation as such, and I wasn't as bored as I would have been at home.

I am very much looking forward to normality in Semester 2. Formal dinners, Inter-College sport and pubs to name a few things that will hopefully return bigger and better. In the context of this year, with a newfound appreciation of the small things, it may be the most enjoyable semester yet.

Paul Schilling

Going into my second year at Tommy More, I was anxious but excited, to meet all the new people coming to College.

The first few weeks back were amazing, getting back



into the rhythm of things, meeting new people, having fun and feeling free again. Then things all changed when the fear of Covid-19 showed up.

For me this was a big source of anxiety, and although Tommy put in excellent strategies to make living here as safe as possible, I felt like I needed to go home because I didn't want to feel trapped in Perth away from my family. This was a huge change to my 2020 plans and has been the biggest challenge of the year so far. I missed being able to just hang out with people, but I was also happy to be home.

One highlight from this year, for me, was being able to see how we came together as a community to make the best of a bad situation. No one wanted to have to stay away from each other, but I admire how as a society we recognised the dangers of letting Covid spread, and actively chose to do things we wished we didn't have to do, to protect the vulnerable. In a time of panic, we came together.

Among the chaos this year has given us, it has been speckled with special moments. It has given us a new understanding of life and taught us how to live in the uncertainty and as much as we don't like how this year has turned out, it will shape us and change us in ways we would never expect. We are lucky to live in Australia, and I am grateful that I have much less to worry about, than the rest of the world.

I am so excited for next semester to be able to do all the fun things that Tommy has to offer. I'm grateful to be here. This year has been a roller coaster of emotions, and will continue to be, so we just have to make the most of every moment.

Lauren Henville

To say that my first six months at Tommy have been the best six months of my life is quite the understatement. From the small town of Manjimup, I came up to Perth after my gap year at a winery having an exceptional ability of forgetting that traffic lights exist, not knowing about wearing anything other than work boots and thinking that my life at college would be second to my life at home. To mum's disappointment, this is definitely not the case! Tommy has provided me with opportunities that are beyond anything I could have expected. From the incredible Outreach Program to sports to academic and pastoral care, there is rarely a dull moment! During the tough times that 2020 has brought our world, our community at Tommy provided an environment that allowed the mental impacts of Covid-19 to be significantly reduced - something that would never have been done if I was living in a share house.

To have Matilda Bay and UWA across the road, and Kings Park right behind us, Tommy is in a pretty special location. The people I now call my best friends are from all around the state - Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Geraldton, Albany, Busselton, the list goes on and on (and I've only known them since February!) Just always having someone willing to hang out, steal clothes from and make unnecessary trips to Kmart with really makes the difference. That's definitely my favourite part of Tommy- that and teasing everyone because Monkey (our dog) lets me pat her (it's the ultimate goal of college life)! The fact I get meals cooked for me is awesome too because sometimes spaghetti on toast three times a day doesn't cut the mustard. From what I've experienced here at Tommy already makes me so excited for what's to come, I really don't know how it could get any better! The second I put that fresher shirt on, I knew I'd made the right decision in choosing Tommy More.

Darcie Bowden



After running a successful O-Week at College as a member of the Student Club Committee, the semester began with normal lectures, labs and tutorials keeping me busy every day... but after a few weeks of business as usual, the news started becoming more concerning and classes shut.

Given I'm an at risk person in regards to getting sick I headed home and spent six weeks on the family farm. These weeks were nice to spend time with family but reminded me of the benefits of college. The closeness to university and the study space afforded at college makes such a difference to productivity. The value of living in a community like Tommy became apparent as well from everything from just hanging out to talking to people at dinner and studying in groups. Hopefully Semester 2 returns to normal life with in person university.

Jamie Brown

2020 has been a special year for me and everyone. The biggest challenge would be the virus. I was only going back to China for two weeks, but as the outbreak struck, I was stuck there for two months. Then I had to travel to Thailand to quarantine before coming back to Perth and quarantining once again.

It challenged me big time with all the time spent alone and not being able to go out at all, but there was a silver lining. I learnt how to adapt to changes and focus more on my goals no matter what.

I was always afraid of changes and thought any change would ruin my progress. This whole situation made me realise that if I have passion and put in the effort, I will always find ways to grow and make progress. I also picked up reading and journaling, which were things I used to do years ago when everything was offline. I also made a lot progress on meditation and my grades actually went up without any distractions. Coming out of this, I never felt calmer.

It made me realise and cherish things I took for granted. Things like friendships, families and to make an effort to reach out and communicate more often with the people I value the most in my life. I was able to focus my energy on things and people that matter most to me.

For the rest of 2020 and beyond, I just hope I will take everything I learnt from this challenge and keep doing what I'm doing to get better and reach closer to my goals every single day.

Marvin Mah



The troubles of 2020 have resulted in a very different year so far at Tommy More. As an international exchange student from the UK, the uncertainties and worries caused by COVID-19 have been felt to a great extent. I've been told on numerous occasions to return home by family, the UK government and my home university, however I ultimately made the final decision to stay and see out my semester here at Tommy.

With social distancing rules in place, different dining arrangements and extreme caution being taken over personal hygiene, Tommy has been a much different, yet still rewarding experience over the course of this semester. Whilst I could argue, as would be expected, this has not been an as action-packed, enjoyable semester as we all would have hoped for due to external circumstances, Tommy has still made this time much better than it would have otherwise been; staying at Tommy meant that we were lucky enough to still spend quality time with our friends, despite being in lockdown.

The highlight of Tommy for me this semester has to be the much closer bonds formed with my fellow collegians who stayed at Tommy throughout this semester. With a number of College residents returning home, I formed much greater friendships than I may otherwise have done as those of us left at College spent lots of time together. These are friendships that I am sure I will hold on to for the rest of my life. Celebrating my 21st birthday was also a very unique experience given the lockdown restrictions, but those around me ensured that I still had plenty of reasons to celebrate and for that I will forever be thankful.

Sadly, the end of this semester marks the end of my time here in Australia and at Tommy. My hope for the rest of 2020 and beyond is that my Tommy family remain healthy, happy and continue in their successes in university life, as well as try their best to enjoy partying as much as they can without me and my unmatched aux ability. For me personally, my hope is that I can return home safely and finish my final year of university on a high note, achieve the grades and accolades I know I can, and then return back to my real home here in Perth afterwards.

Jack Furbank



My experience at Tommy More in 2020 has been unique to say the least. We began the semester with 'O-Week' the fun-filled week that helped ease the entire fresher group into College life. This was a great highlight of the semester as it allowed the formation of new friendships that are sure to last a lifetime.

Then, with the outbreak of the global pandemic, Covid-19, the College implemented many safety measures to ensure the wellbeing of all residents. This was challenging as it changed how College life functioned. Before Covid-19, I took for granted things such as standing closer than 1.5 metres from people and shorter queues at dinner. After a while everyone got the hang of things and it became easy to deal with.

Moving from a high-school environment directly into a college environment I was unaware of how well everyone would get along and how our diverse demographics and backgrounds didn't act as barriers. I've made many friends of different ages and from different countries. With restrictions easing in WA, I'm sure that Semester 2 will be packed with many great events and fun experiences. I'm excited to see what the future holds for the rest of 2020 and for the rest of my time at St Thomas More College.

Bailey Edwards



2020 started off great. I came back to Perth earlier than any other year to embark on my new journey as an RA. This was meant to be the highlight of my year, along with going into my final year of undergraduate studies. Over the holidays and prep week, big plans were being made to give back wing residents an unforgettable experience. This was the year to push my boundaries academically and as an international student.

Enter COVID-19. When my parents called to voice their concerns over my safety, I honestly felt confused and annoyed. This was supposed to be one of the best years of my life but somehow this pandemic got in the way. With tickets booked, all I could do was pack my bags and say goodbye to everyone with the hopes that I could return ASAP.

Four months in, and although I still feel that maybe I should have stayed in Perth, I have benefitted from the extended visit back home. We were put in a two month lockdown where I had nothing to do but exercise and study. I have never been so focused in my life! I took time to focus on family and realised that my grandparents were getting old. Once the lockdown was lifted, I made it a point to visit them at least once a week.

I experienced some special moments that made me treasure home more. As an international student, I missed many birthdays of those close to me. Being back for the longest period since 2017 made me realise that I missed the comfort of home. The biggest event that has happened so far has to be the general election in Singapore. Just last week, I voted for the first time in my life!

My wish for 2020 right now is for the COVID-19 situation to ease up so that I can return to Perth. My crazy focus on my studies lasted until the end of finals and I'm not sure if I have the willpower or strength to do that again. That was not easy. I am looking forward to the day I get to walk into the dining hall for some vegemite on burnt toast again.

Sean Soh

What a Semester! It was a few months when we have learned that even when our world was turned upside down, sport really is more important than life.

However, while the world around the Tommy community changed, the core values and strengths of our family remained the same. Our family-like atmosphere remained strong and never faltered. We truly demonstrated that friendship is the strongest armour in the world.

Life at Tommy did change and it changed in ways that I couldn't have dreamed of 12 months ago. I never considered that I'd be sitting at a dining room table with only three people, or that a world without inter-wing sport could exist (Chris Jones would be spinning in his retirement home). I never thought that I wouldn't be able to go to university classes or be able to enjoy Fremantle win games of footy (not that happens much anyway but still...)

But, while we faced challenges with transitioning to online learning, we could all rest easy knowing that we are in one of the safest places in the world and still enjoy the simple pleasures of life; like making dumb sport videos, being with our friends and beating Tom in table tennis. While in Western Australia, I'm lucky enough to be able to joke about the virus but the truth is that it has made small but significant impacts on all of our lives.

In planning for Semester 2, and with things looking on the up in WA, we are in for one exciting semester. We will have the return of our great social events, the return of Tucky and finally the return of inter-college sport (you have no idea how bored I have been).

Lachie McLean



The elephant in the room so far in 2020 is without a doubt: COVID19. The whole world went into chaos and big changes were made... and yet, my year felt like a stressful holiday. Let me explain...

When WA decided to go into lockdown, creating internal borders and with Perth being across an interstate border, I opted to move back home. Fifty kilometres from the nearest town and a solid two miles to the nearest neighbour, let's just say that I mastered social distancing.

I didn't get to see shops being shut, restrictions introduced and shelves of toilet paper empty. Thank goodness for Facebook to keep me connected to the rest of the world. It was just me, my dad, my pets and a really messed up study plan. It was awfully difficult to redirect my attention away from my pets to my study and being at home felt like semester break. The highlight of my year thus far was adopting my two pet baby goats, Jason and Nibbles. They made me laugh, even when they got into something they weren't supposed to: the shed, the yard, the grain bin, the garage, the garden... yeah they are a wee bit naughty, but I love them to bits!

As always, life goes on and university study awaited. Endless emails and several zoom calls later, Semester 1 came and went by. The weirdest experience to date was online exams. It felt strange sitting at my desk being recorded on my laptop for a solid two hours, especially with the cat meowing outside my window.

I had hopes to settle back into my first-year room and meet a whole new bunch of freshers. I barely learnt everyone's names before I returned home. I did have a mini surprise reunion with my balcony neighbour at the Bannister Roadhouse when I stopped for some lunch (honestly, these guys sell the BEST pies.) It was so good to see a face from College and reignited my joy in returning to the city.

There isn't much of 2020 left and I plan to live it to the fullest! I'm one of the lucky ones who has a birthday that lands in Phase 3 of WA's COVID Roadmap to Recovery, so a party there shall be. On the flipside, if COVID attended during your birthday season, even more reasons to have a pool party later this year when the weather is at its best!

Zara Leusciatti

In commencing my first year of postgraduate studies, I knew the year would be unlike any that I had ever experienced before; but never in a hundred years would I have anticipated what 2020 had in store. My mind was fixated upon the looming reality that I would soon start my placement in hospitals, entering my clinical years of learning at UWA. For three years, it had been just a distant possibility, lingering on the outskirts of my attention. Now, it was so close I could almost taste it, with a mere 12 weeks of pre-clinical training separating my dreams from reality.

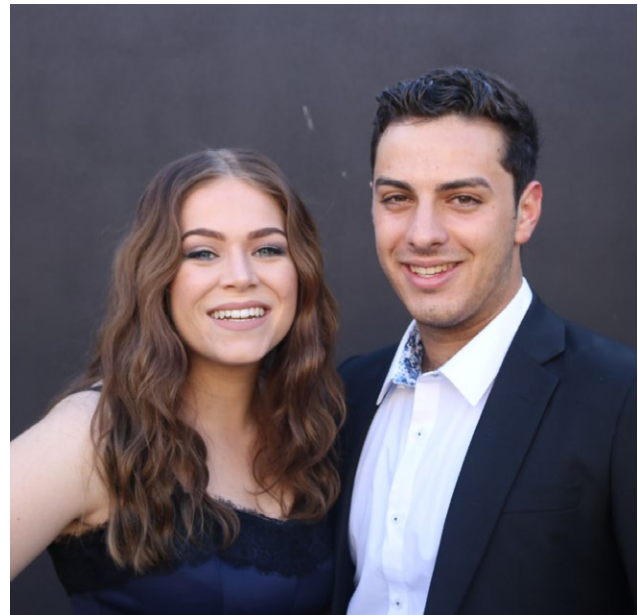
At first, news of the bushfires felt as though we were all living with a severe case of de-ja-vu. It had happened many times before and would likely happen again. So the mindset started off being that the fires would subside and life would grow once more. But as the days went on, the fires got larger and the danger grew thicker; ruining the homes of many and killing millions of animals.

Amongst all the chaos, people started to band together over social media, raising funds to assist the cause. The tides began to turn and finally it seemed we were out of the woods. (HAH!)

Then word came that many of the international students from Tommy would not be able to arrive on time, due to an unknown respiratory virus in China. This threw a definite spanner in the works from an operational perspective (being the Senior Resident Advisor) but as far as my studies went, 'pre-clinical' was running smoothly. Sure, I'd be missing a few vital members of the leadership team during prep week, but fortunately due to the gift of technology, such issues could be alleviated.

As time progressed, hysteria began to run wild, leading bright Australian's down the dark path of overbuying EVERYTHING (especially toilet paper). As a medical student, I believed it was my role to stay up to date on it all and provide the best possible information I could. This was obviously quite challenging in a continuously changing climate, so I was very blessed to be in a position where my employers immersed themselves in this topic, to ensure both my education and safety.

Half way through March, the full magnitude of COVID-19 began to hit, with all my face-to-face pre-clinical teaching, seeing it's end. Being a post-graduate medical course, and one of the first faculties



to suspend in-class learning, it became clear to me that COVID-19 was going to change the world we knew. This was further fortified when a month later it was announced that clinical training would be scrapped.

To say I was disappointed is an understatement, but when compared to the suffering experienced by many across the globe at that time; it was easy to find resolve. Since then, I have experienced a large number of challenges that have made 2020 a year to remember. But instead of focusing on these negatives in an already difficult time, I would like to invest my time in appreciating the positives instead.

I live in a wonderful place, filled with kind, caring people that have shaped me into the person I am today. I have been fortunate enough to gain experience and wisdom from those with the years to prove it, and those that will soon learn their voices need to be heard. If I could provide any advice from this time spent in a pandemic, it would be to embrace the fear and learn that adversity is the greatest teacher of all. And if you ever get the chance to listen to someone like Father Peter Tran? Listen.

I would just like to finish off by saying a massive thank you to the admin team (especially Bec and Tom), my RAs, and of course, my true partner in crime, who has been an absolute rock through all of this, Jesse.

Tommy, Tommy, Tommy
Oi! Oi! Oi!

Jessica Fenton

2020 has been a series of fortunate and unfortunate events combined with a roller coaster of emotions. It is safe to say that no one was prepared for COVID nor anticipated the impact it has had on us. Before COVID was relevant we had O-week, I remember moving into Tommy on my own, not knowing anyone and the closest family member is 4,000 kilometres away from me. Instead of drowning in my own self pity I was determined to meet as many people as I can.

Two days into O-week I befriended a large group of friends from Bunbury, they knew each other before Tommy and they welcomed me into their circle with open arms. It was a special moment to me as I found a family while being away from mine, it also made me realise the significance of Tommy to me. I was living the fresher life to the fullest until COVID hit Tommy like a ton of bricks.

At the height of COVID, Western Australian borders were bound to close. It was only logical for Western Australians in Tommy to go back to their hometowns and live out the lockdown period with their families. It was at that time when I realised that the days that I have with my newfound family in Tommy are numbered. But the bittersweet part in this is that we partied and acted like everyday was just a normal day in Tommy, ignoring the fact that people were leaving everyday, until the day that all of my friends left. It only hit me at that moment that I wouldn't be seeing them for a long time and that I would be on my own for a while.

I lived through most of the two months of lockdown in solitude, which isn't the ideal first year experience. But it passed quickly. The next thing I know once lockdown was lifted is that everyone was rushing their way back to Tommy. And the fresher life continues.

While 2020 has been challenging there will always be sunshine after the rain. Lockdown was horrible but Tommy gave me a group of incredible friends and a sense of belonging, which in my opinion is not a bad trade. I hope to partake in more College activities and befriend as many people as I can in the years to come.

Jordan Wong



2020 has been very different from what I expected, although my experience so far at Tommy More has been incredible. From college and university events to discovering Perth as well as meeting new people from all over the world, college life has added joy and excitement to 2020. Despite making the decision to spend a couple of months at home during the COVID-19 lockdown, I could not wait to return to the college. In the first two months of living at Tommy I made lifelong friends and felt part of the amazing Tommy community and was eager to return.

Amy Pacecca



2020 I'll remember as the year I began university and my time at Tommy.

Meeting so many new people in the same position as me at College made settling in away from home much easier. It didn't take long before I started making friends and memories that I will cherish for life.

Leaving Perth for 3 months over the lockdown period, I missed the college atmosphere at Tommy surrounded by friends and living in such a beautiful part of the city. I was definitely very excited to get back and can't wait for an exciting Semester 2!

Kate Pacecca



My Tommy More College experience as a first year has been an interesting one to say the least. Moving to Perth and joining a new cohort was initially daunting and I had expected to find it difficult to adjust and make new friends. However, this fear was quickly overcome during the first week of College. O-week was a huge highlight in the first half of this year, as it turns out party buses, Adventure World rides, casinos, and a nightclub party are great opportunities to let loose, have fun and meet tons of new people who were in the exact same position as me. By the time the formal dinner came around I had already formed new friendships and my transition into college life had occurred smoothly.

Unfortunately, with the outbreak of Covid-19, I found myself facing travelling back home to Albany. It was a difficult choice to make as I was not sure if staying at college or leaving would be better for my studies, however during this time my family needed me home, so it was back to Albany I went. Despite this difficult and stressful time for study, being away from College helped me realise how much I missed it and the people there.

This semester I was also lucky enough to be elected as the Fresher Rep, though due to the lack of events I unfortunately have not been able to do much in my role. However, now with the easing of restrictions and semester 2 coming up I can begin working with the International Rep on our big project, O-week 2.0.

I look forward to the second semester as I hope everything goes back to normal and people can return to college. I imagine the rest of the year will be filled to the brim with exciting new events that I hope to be apart of. Sport is also coming back, and I cannot wait to get amongst the competition again, so here is to hoping the rest of 2020 at Tommy More is going to be great.

Sophie Lynch

I came into 2020 expecting lots of social gatherings, and after having the opportunity to attend the 2019 Cambodia Collaboration, I was ready to apply again. Two weeks later, we received advice that the trip would not go ahead this year, and that was one of the first of many disappointments. I took the option to go home for two months to be with my family. The borders were closing around regional areas and so I didn't want to be stuck without the chance to be with my family for an unknown period of time. Life at home was relaxed - there was lots of surfing and going on the boat. It was hard to focus on my studies at this time. I'm sure lots of students would agree. I'm back now and I almost feel like a fresher again. It's been so great catching up with friends and I'm looking forward to jam-packed Semester 2.

Nat Sloper

The best part of 2020 so far has been coming back to Tommy after the lockdown. When I was at home, I had just moved towns and didn't have many friends there... but we were all in the thick of social distancing at the time anyway, so I'd have still spent most of my time in my room studying. I was well and truly ready to be with my friends again. When I came back, the people who had stayed, had formed really close bonds, and I was able to come back a little earlier too, which was great. Having missed two months together on campus, I feel that everyone returned with an appreciation for the social connection at Tommy, and are excited for such a busy calendar.

Shenisa Tennent





2020, where do I even begin?

January - I moved from the USA where I had lived for three years, back to Australia. I left all my friends behind and began the long and emotional journey back home - I was expecting it to be difficult, and let me tell you, it really, really was.

February

I moved to Perth from the Australian Capital Territory all by myself, and while that may not seem like a big deal to you, as someone with a disability, it's a HUGE deal and I am incredibly proud of myself. O'Week was full on with lots of new people and experiences that were quite daunting but I had a lot of support from the Resident Advisors as well as my new friends and did my best. Despite my nerves, I ended up having a great time! Oh and I started at UWA, which was scary, but it's exciting to start this new adventure.

March

I met James (a massive highlight of this year) and started making even more friends but sadly that was cut short with with lockdown. In truth, I began to really struggle - my depression and anxiety began to get worse and it made dealing with my disability a lot harder.

April

I finally decided to be brave and I started seeing a psychologist as well as a psychiatrist at UWA and began to look after my mental health - it's important and if anyone else is struggling, I highly recommend asking for help and seeing someone at your University. Initially, I was worried it wouldn't help, but now I am honestly the happiest I have ever been and I am proud of the progress I have made.

May and June

Living through a global crisis, moving out of home only a few months ago from across the country had me reassess my mental and emotional capacity. I realised, like I'm sure many students have, that I needed to take care of myself, and thus, made some changes to my units to reduce some of the overwhelm I was feeling. There have been both ups and downs this Semester - I've been challenged by my health and the drastic changes around me, but I've made some incredible friends and am really grateful for the support I've received from my Tommy family. This year has been nothing like I expected so far, but I cannot wait for what is around the corner.

Lil Prucha

Semester 1 has been a year... well at least it's felt like one. A semester of several emails a day including the words "unprecedented" and "uncertain", a semester of rapid change and of new hobbies. Covid-19 was unexpected and not great on a global scale however within the College community it was actually quite enjoyable. At first it was challenging to adapt to online classes, especially while studying a degree that is designed to be 50% practical. It was difficult to discover that there would be an unknown amount of time where we wouldn't be able to go and visit our families. Virtual meetings and gatherings became the norm and the world around us had vastly changed.

Quarantine for me, meant more time to get creative indoors, I taught myself embroidery and relearned the guitar, I appreciated the things I used to enjoy when I wasn't at uni, things that Covid gave me time to do. I grew closer to the fellow collegians who also stayed at college and the community around Tommy was extremely positive.

Living in middle wing I am central to everything at College meaning that I could always see when people were playing sport on the quad and could always have a look at the line for the dining hall to judge the best time to go to dinner. I knew that every time I would take a study break around 4pm someone would be on the quad ready to throw a frisbee, kick a footy or have a chat. I personally believe it forced us to form deeper connections and learn more about each other. I swore that after high school you would never see me do the beep test again, however something about the community made sure I was on the quad every Wednesday afternoon either cheering people on or running myself.

With no time being wasted going to the beach or hanging out at uni I was able to focus a lot more on my study, which as a third year was a blessing. Everyone at College was studying and stuck to a very similar routine, we found the study rooms at College that we were most comfortable in and the people that were easiest to study with. It made me realise that the more work you put in and the more time you spend studying actually improves your marks... crazy right?.

Although this period was very stressful and anxiety-inducing, it taught me some valuable lessons in time management and balancing study with taking time for myself. Anyone who knows me will understand that I am generally a very busy person with a heavily scheduled day, so it was a big shock to me when I no longer had to be on campus every day for a class or a meeting and I actually had free time.

I am honestly very glad I stayed at College over this period of time, not only because being trapped in the small town I grew up in sounds like a nightmare but because I went into quarantine with a bunch of friends at college and I came out of quarantine with a second family. I hope that Semester 2 carries the same sense of community and belonging that semester 1 did and that those who stayed at home during this period can also experience this.

Shae Richardson





Using opportunities to give back

“One opportunity taken, will lead to many more down the road”. I remember this quote well from a Principal I had in primary school back in Pingelly, and I’m happy to have heard it. Since that time, I have taken what opportunities I can to travel and educate myself, such as participating in the Follow The Dream Program in high school, a program which has now helped me during my time at university.

Follow The Dream (FTD) is a program for Indigenous students to help with their education by running after school study sessions with volunteer teachers and outside tutors. Without this program, I can’t say I’d have had the same ATAR and university experience, and FTD has helped me get into the Career Trackers program, which supports Indigenous university students by both finding internships over the summer and winter break, as well as providing workshops on a range

of topics from culture to skills in the workplace. Over the summer break of 2019 – 2020 I interned at Wood PLC, an engineering consultancy where I had the opportunity to deliver a presentation and assist in completing a Net Benefit Analysis Report for the company’s president here in Perth.

Earlier this year, I also received the Motorola Solutions STEM University Scholarship, awarded to only five indigenous students studying engineering, who also participated in the FTD program.

I am very aware of how lucky I am, and I am constantly reminding myself of it, so I see it as a responsibility to give back where ever I can, and one of the ways I have committed to doing so is by returning to my high school to help tutor the next generation of FTD students so they might be afforded the same opportunities I have.

Blake Griffiths

Social Distance Life

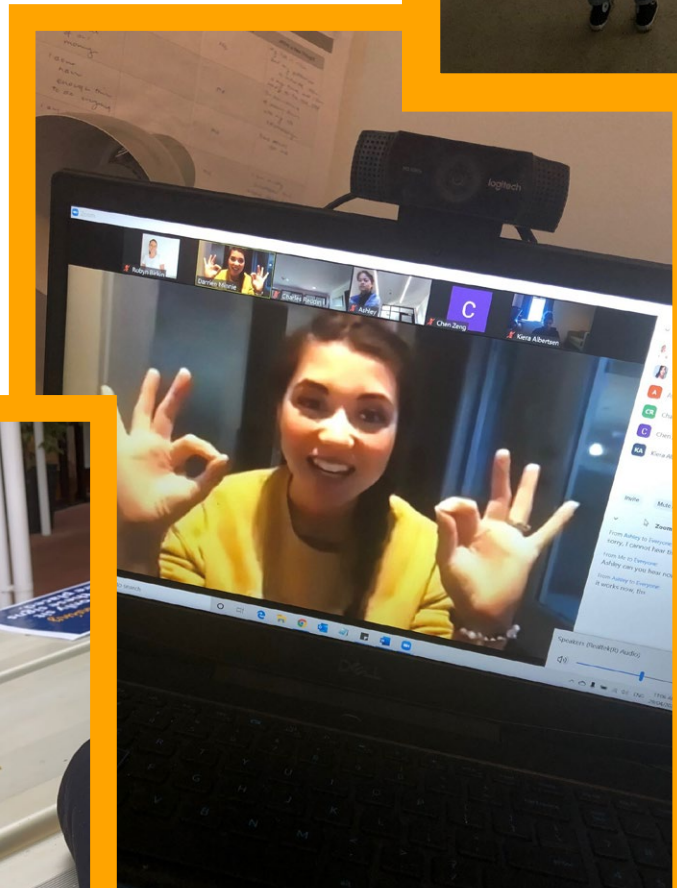
We started studying outside more to get out of our rooms.



We showed our respects to fallen soldiers on ANZAC Day on campus, whilst observing social distancing.



We had virtual yoga classes (with Darrien Minnie), mindfulness sessions, and multiple week-long virtual fitness challenges.

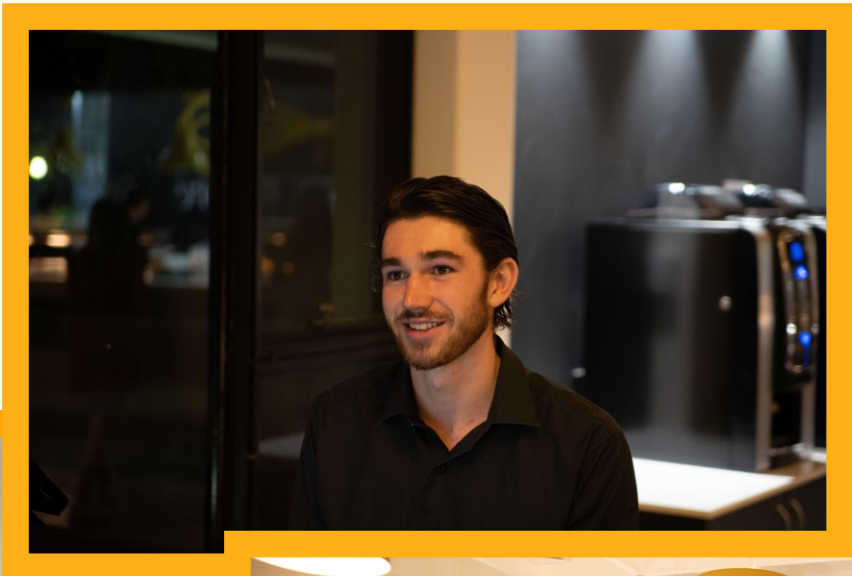


We kept in touch with students who had returned home temporarily over Messenger and Zoom.



We sold industrial toilet paper and other supplies to students when there were shortages of essentials at the shops.





We missed seeing the children at Ronald McDonald House, so our students and staff sent them virtual hugs via a social media video campaign.



We got dressed up for Fancy Fridays in the dining room, complete with maitre de, delicious food... and social distancing.

Scan to check out the STMC Online Portal!



Student

students.stmc.uwa.edu.au

Update your details
View handbooks
Connect with mentors
Access Career and
Personal Development
Resources
Photo Gallery



Alumni

alumni.stmc.uwa.edu.au

Update your details
View archives (additions
frequently)
RSVP to events
Get involved at Tommy
More
Share your news



Applications now open for 2021!

Prospective students are invited to apply now for St Thomas More College for 2021. We are expecting strong demand from students across Western Australia as universities have changed their application criteria, and many have deferred original plans to take a gap year.

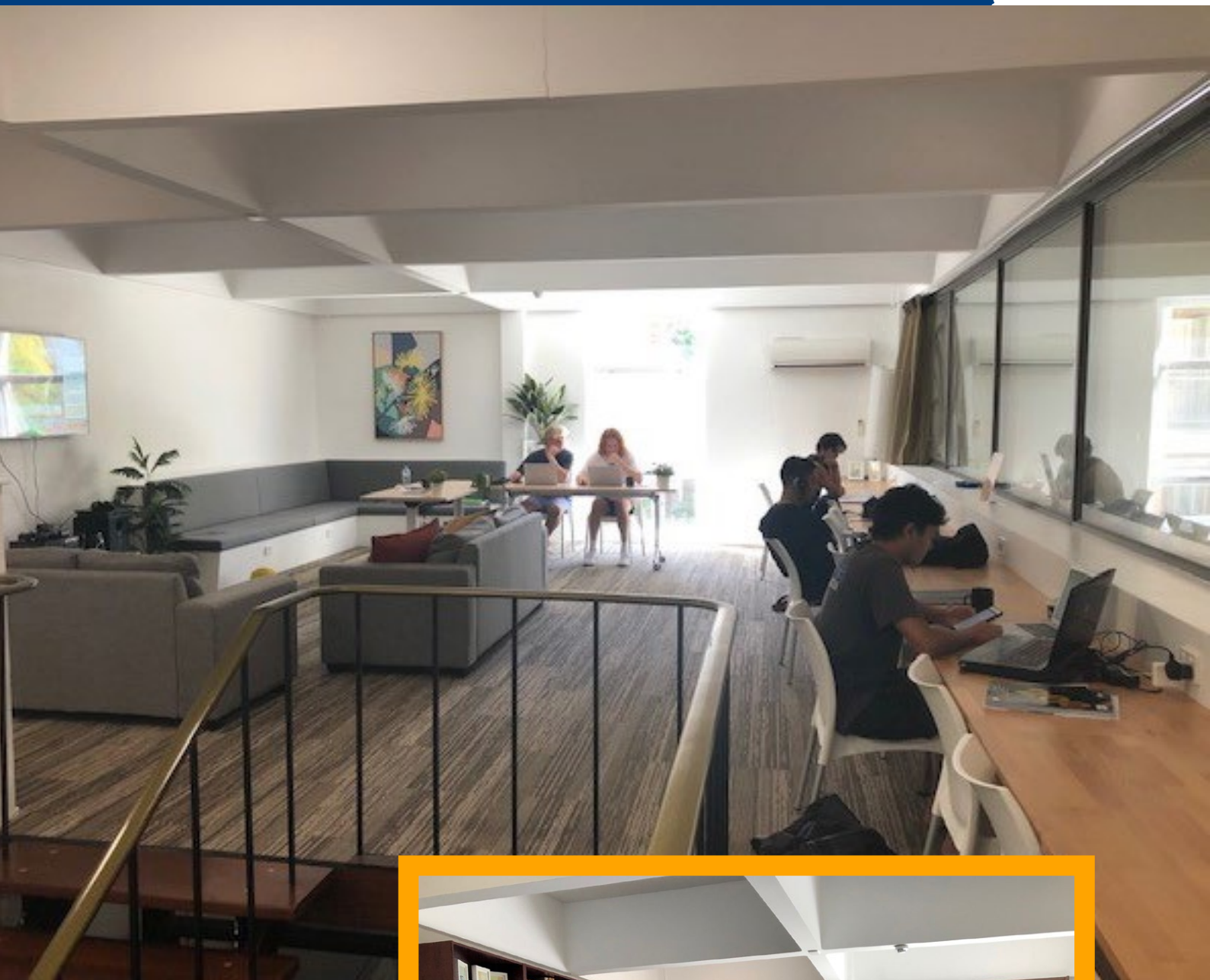
Friends and family of students and alumni who are considering moving to Perth for university (or TAFE with a view to later attend university) are most welcome to visit St Thomas More College for an in person tour.



Tours can be booked here

→ <https://stmc.uwa.edu.au/admissions/arrange-tour/> ←

Graduate Association Lounge Gets a Makeover



Virtual Tours Updated on Our Website!

In preparation for the Virtual UWA Open Day, St Thomas More College updated the virtual tour on the website for four areas that have been refurbished since the redevelopment.

The Hickey Academic Lounge, Begley Academic Lounge, Reed Gymnasium and Graduate Association Lounge now join 18 other locations on the website.

If you are unable to make it to the College in the future for a tour of the new facilities, Alumni are encouraged to visit the website for a virtual tour at stmc.uwa.edu.au/virtual-tour.



The Lounge in 1979

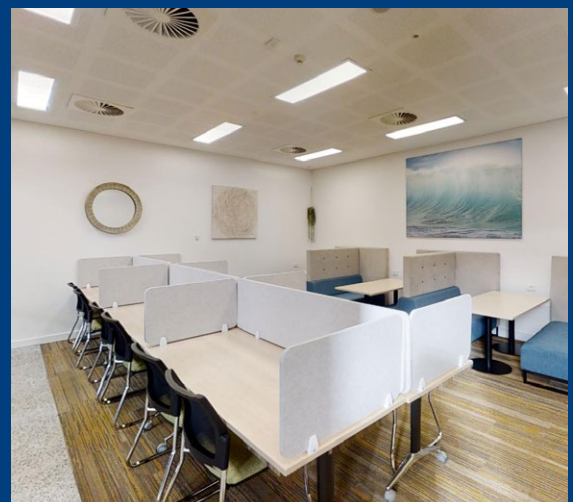
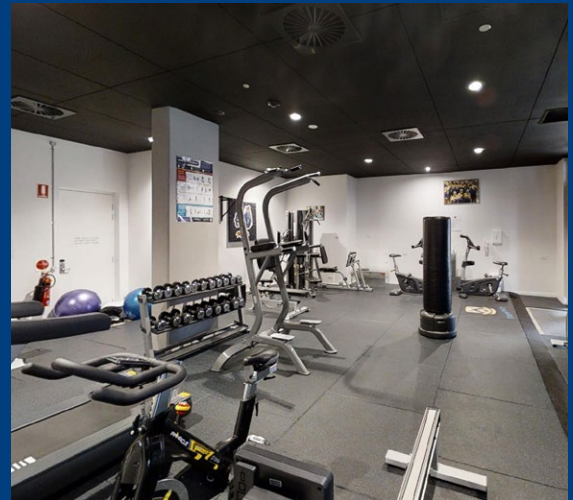
Many of our Alumni will remember the Graduate Association Lounge, located at the back of the dining room on the first floor.

For a number of years' now, this room has been reserved for members of the Graduate Association, students who are in their third year or above of undergraduate studies, or whom are undertaking post-graduate studies.

Many former students will also remember the large bookcase with old law journals, encyclopedias and other books (which the College has stored for now - if any Alumni are interested in them, please contact us).

At the beginning of the year, the College made the decision to conduct a soft refurbishment of the room to enable more space and particularly, the opportunity for more students to be able to use the space at one time.

The bookshelves were replaced with bench seating, and along the window overlooking the dining room, a desk that spans the width of the room was built. Both areas have USB charging stations in keeping with technology. It certainly has not disappointed, with a number of students now using this room regularly for their studies.





Alumni news & events

Alumni Sundowner

Friday 20 November 2020
6.00pm - 9.00pm

We hope you'll join us for an evening of connection and conversation across generations of proud Tommy Alumni.

Dress is smart casual
Substantial nibbles served

In previous years, this event has been reserved for Alumni who graduated from the College more than five years ago, however this year all alumni who lived at St Thomas More College at any time for more than six months are invited to attend.

Email invitations will be sent out closer to the date.

Share your news!

We love sharing the news of our Alumni and keeping in touch - your articles and updates are a great source of interest to our past, current and future students. Wedding photos, career updates, achievements - we want to know!

Send us a photograph and your news to alumni@stmc.uwa.edu.au and let us know if you're happy for your news to be published in an upcoming edition of *The Utopian*.



1970 50th Reunion Luncheon

Convocation of UWA Graduates, will be hosting a reunion luncheon for those graduates who are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their graduation from The University of Western Australia (a first or higher degree) this year.

The 50th Anniversary Reunion Luncheon is an annual event in the UWA Calendar and will be held on Saturday, 21 November 2020. Each year one of the distinguished graduates from the year addresses the gathering, which is always well-attended, with many graduates flying in from interstate and overseas to meet up with former friends.

This year, the Reunion Luncheon for the Graduates of 1970 will be held in Winthrop Hall at a cost of \$95.00 per person / \$75 Concession Card holders, which includes beverages.

Various 'UWA Friends' groups will conduct short walking tours around the campus before lunch, starting from 11:00am. A highlight of the day is the booklet Convocation produces for the reunion, which contains a brief outline of what graduates have been doing since their graduation.

Please do not hesitate to contact Kris Bather phone +61 8 6488 3006 or email Convocation@uwa.edu.au regarding this luncheon.

Follow Us!



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Are you available to be a career mentor?

We are thrilled that so many of our Alumni are interested in contributing to the career development of our students through mentoring and we have a variety of options for staying involved.

Visit stmc.uwa.edu.au/alumni to add your name to our Alumni mentor database.

Do we have your details?

Don't miss out on news, networking events and reunion invitations for Tommy More! Make sure you keep us in the loop with your latest contact details - you can update them on our website or call us on 9386 0111.

Would you prefer a printed version?

Printed versions are available on request. To request a printed version, please email us at alumni@stmc.uwa.edu.au.



St Thomas More College
CRAWLEY WESTERN AUSTRALIA

48 Mounts Bay Road
CRAWLEY WA 6009

Telephone: +61 8 9386 0111
Email: admissions@stmc.uwa.edu.au
Website: stmc.uwa.edu.au

 [tommymorecollegeUWA](https://www.facebook.com/tommymorecollegeUWA)
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