



Uncle Des Ord, Wiradjuri

My Mob are the Wiradjuri people in Dubbo, but I was raised in Bourke, that's the Barkindji people. I've been there since I was 4 or 5, so I was there for 25 years in Bourke. There's a kinship there 'cos they adopt you into their community and you gotta learn their ways and I've done that, like fishing and everything with the boys and yarns with the Old People. There's a lot of history out in the Bush there and I like hearing it and then you hand it down.

I miss being back home. Not only because of the traffic, the rush or whatever here, but because the people are more relaxed and it's just a different humour as well out there with the Old People, I miss all that. Everything is funny out there, the way they tell their stories and like, they don't meant to be funny, but they're funny without realising it the way they come out with things. The pace is very different. There's not the same stress. It's more abundant and more relaxed. We can go fishing, camping, hunting kangaroos, emus, porcupines, whatever. When I do go out there, I'm always like, I need to get to that River first, the Darling River and put my feet in the red dirt.

My Culture gives me a sense of identity. It helps with everyday life, knowing where you come from and it just helps you in that sense. You don't want to be walking around wondering, 'Who am I? What am I supposed to do?', so Culture just gives you a sense of identity and confidence that I'm Desmond Ord and I'm Wiradjuri.

Considering what the Old People went through, it makes you feel like if they've been through all that then I'm a stronger person because of them. You can't take offence with a lot of things because it's nothing to what the Old People went through.

I've done a lot of volunteering in Bourke. Especially when there's funerals on. I'm involved with the Four Gospel Family Fellowship church out there, run by an Indigenous pastor and Elder who's been there since I was little. So when a funeral is on I'll help with the sound and media, or even just pulling chairs out and making sure, the Elders are being looked after and they got a good spot & a cup of tea or a feed at the end. Sorry Business unfortunately happens very regularly, and when there's Sorry Business in a small community, the whole community gets together. So there's no roster or anything, I'm there because I'm part of the community and I'll know everyone that's going to come through that door. When we get outta towners visiting on Sorry Business and we know there's a lot of family at someone's house, we'll go and get them some fish or go hunting and get a kangaroo or emu. Then we cook it and invite everyone over or give them some meat to have a feast.



These days we only catch up when it's Sorry Business, so we need to get together and catch up. It's a way of helping each other and letting other people know that you've got their back by just helping in any way. Grieving together with them, sharing the pain and it just takes a little bit of weight off other people's shoulders. There's a few Elders still left out in Bourke, but yeah Sorry Business happens all the time, especially in small communities like that, there's not a lot of health facilities, so they gotta move closer to the specialists and doctors and all that. And I think that's what makes some go faster, when they're away from their home they go down-hill so quick from leaving their family and lifestyle behind.

The number of people who support is slowly dying out a little bit cos the young people are not really trained. You can't just sit and watch Elders, because you gotta always make sure they're alright and offer 'Do you need a cuppa Uncle, Aunt?' That respect is slowly going, so we do need a bit more of handing down to the younger people because they're just not taught in their home, there's not enough discipline I reckon. I've got five boys, my oldest is 21 and my youngest is 9 months. They've been taught a bit of Culture, but there's a lot of respect as well. Respect your Elders, your Uncles and Aunties - I made sure that was there. Young people pick up on what they see more than what we say. So you gotta act it as well in front of them, setting examples.

I'll go out as much as I can now back home but in the city it's just as important to keep up with Mob – visiting & staying in touch. I got young kids and if they got young kids or going to a footy game or whatever, we'll do a lot of family activities together. Make those connections and raise the kids together and that type of thing. Over winter, I just wanna go back in the bush and do a bit of camping, catching up with the Elderly & family. Here, you can't find a place to yourself. Where if you go 2kms out of town out there, you've got the whole Riverbank to yourself. You just need that quiet time to yourself sometimes.

Especially when I'm coming from Sydney, I just need to unwind and get that rushed feeling out.

I'm a musician & guitarist in the Bell River Band, we're a family band. So if there's someone who's sick, like cancer or something, then our band or muso's will get together and we'll put on a ball or something and we raise money to help them. Or even NAIDOC or something, we'll do tele quests. So yeah, with my skills in Bourke I'm pretty much the main one or the go-to guy when anyone needs to get a band together or get sound equipment.

My family background is all music and sports. I was little bit into sports but I just loved music. Growing up in church, I'd love to listen to music in church and it got handed down to me from my family and I've done it ever since. With the tech stuff it sorta goes in with the music, so I followed that path and did a couple of media courses. I'm still learning and I still want to learn stuff. I don't think I know it all, so I just keep going. I've been playing for over 20 years or 30 years on a guitar, but in my mind I'm still like 'You gotta learn more, you gotta better yourself.' I think it's just in myself to want to keep getting better.



I also help out at the local footy club, the Bourke Warriors out there. If we can raise money as a band sell tickets at the door. Or something, all the money just goes to the local footy club. The next Koori Knockout is going to be out in there in Bathurst this year, so they'll probably get me to help in ways like raising money or just to go there and help them set up tents and stuff for the event, or put on a barbie or something at the motel rooms. I was involved in schools out there too, and now and then I just go in and volunteer to go and play the guitar, and help the kids write their own songs 'cos a lot of kids love music out there. I get shocked how many people are musos and can sing.

Most of the time I'm doing it for nothing, and the thing is when you do it for nothing and it's voluntary, you know you're going to get something back out of it. When it's voluntary, you put 100% into the cause. You want to show people what you can do and what you know. If you get money, then you start putting boundaries up, like 'Oh they're only paying me this. I'm only going to do that much.' Volunteering gets you out there and you just wanna put in 110% because it gives you more energy.

Our band is planning to be in Sydney in a few weeks, we've got 3 gigs lined up there, one at Sydney Town Hall, one in Blacktown and the other one's not locked in yet. I just love going to communities and meeting everyone, I love meeting people. For me it's not just being on the stage, it's going around and meeting everyone, whether they're Indigenous or non-Indigenous, I just love hearing their stories. Especially up in Queensland, the Githabul Mob, I just love the way they cook and the way they do their wild bush tucker in the Earth. Yeah, you can tell I'm a real foodie.

I've not really come across any barriers, cos when you're volunteering you're really just there to help them out and give them what they need. Like, I don't want to come in and take over, I'm just helping. I know not to come in thinking I know everything. I just like to get along with everyone, I'm pretty happy-go-lucky.

It really motivates me to just do my best and showing people what I can do. Going beyond and getting the feedback from people coming up at the end of the night and saying 'Thank you' and 'You really helped me out.' Or if we raised money, 'Look at how much we raised!' I get real enjoyment out of that, making a difference and making someone else happy. That's the payment and the reward, and it makes you feel good inside.

To go out there and volunteer, I just think a lot of respect for other people's cultures is really important. And the Elders? Gotta look after them. With the Old People, sometimes you just gotta listen to them you know. Don't talk too much, just listen and take it all in. 'Cos the Old People, they can't move around or nothing no more so the only thing they can do is just talk and it makes them feel important when you take an interest in them, like, 'Oh, how did you grow up?' It's a bit of joy to them as well, they're getting things off their chest and it's like they're doing something important, which they are.



If I had any advice to anyone looking to volunteer, it's just to get out there and see what you can do with the talents and interests you have, then, later on you might get work from that. I started off volunteering with doing music and just helping out and doing what I love doing. And if you just do whatever your interests and hobbies are, then just share it, soon everyone will see it. Find your skills and build them and eventually get paid to do what you love doing.