

Facility: Junee Correctional Centre
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Dream come true move

The house a prison built is now a home

THE Habitat for Humanity Riverina Prisonbuild has reached an important milestone – the first house built inside a prison has been occupied.

Wendy McLaren, her sons, Luke and Tom, and their dog, Koda, moved into their new home on Friday after a dedication ceremony.

"It's absolutely awesome, a dream come true," Ms McLaren said.

After returning to Junee, Ms McLaren lived with her parents a year before eventually moving to a rental with her two sons.

Habitat for Humanity residents pay off a mortgage on their home in addition to working on the house and fundraising activities for 500 hours.

While Ms McLaren has achieved the 500 hour requirement, she said she would help work on the second house – which is currently looking for an occupant.

"I hope someone else is as lucky as me," she said.

The prison-build project, which originally began in 2010, is a collaboration between Habitat for Humanity, Riverina Institute TAFE NSW and the GEO Group.

"It's a huge milestone," GEO offender

services manager Trevor Coles said.

"It's a great learning curve for everyone, it's the first house built in a prison (in NSW)," he said.

Fundraising began in earnest with donated goods from the Habitat for Humanity and a gala night which raised \$17,000 in April 2011.

Wooden toys made by Junee Correctional Centre inmates were auctioned, along with market stalls, a high tea and an epic ride led by builder Peter Nell to the Birdsville Races all raised funds.

Mr Coles said the project had been a long road but seeing the building finally occupied was "worth the wait".

A second home has been completed by inmates inside the correctional centre and Mr Coles said the block had been prepared and it would soon be put in place.

While inmates continued to work on the first house, it is unclear how many work hours will be completed by them on the second house.

"(The second house) is waiting to be moved to Percy Street where it will become a community project," Mr Coles said.



HOME SWEET HOME: Luke Brown and his mum, Wendy McLaren, moved into Junee's first Habitat for Humanity house on Friday following the dedication ceremony.

Picture: Les Smith