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House goanna's new home

Inmates create art for Catholic office

► RIVERINA

By Declan Rurenga

A PIECE of artwork symbolising the connection to the Wiradjuri land will have a place in the Catholic Schools Office (CSO) thanks to the efforts of inmates from Junee Correctional Centre (JCC).

The totem of the Wiradjuri people – a goanna has been created by Aboriginal inmates enrolled in TAFE metalworking courses.

“We wanted something here at McAlroy House which acknowledges the land of the Wiradjuri nation,” Aboriginal education officer Kelly Humphrey said.

JCC offender services manager Trevor Coles said the inmates worked with TAFE

NSW Riverina Institute teacher Ricki Whybro.

The goanna was originally planned to be just 30 centimetres by 30 centimetres, but grew to 1.3m by 1.3m.

“As the inmates grew in confidence so did the goanna,” Mr Coles said.

“The most important part of the project is the skills the Aboriginal inmates took away from it and the connection to their culture and country,” he said.

Of the six inmates who started the project, which was built over six weeks, three have since been released and enrolled in more TAFE courses.

“It’s something which will give them the confidence to complete their studies and gain meaningful employment,” Mr Coles said.

The inmates have donated \$250 from the funds used to buy the materials for the goanna to the Wagga Base Hospital’s children’s ward, with JCC operator the GEO Group, matching the inmates’ donation.



CULTURAL CONNECTION: Bishop Gerard Hanna and TAFE NSW teacher Ricki Whybro with inmates Stephen Hughes (centre) and (front, left) Geoffrey Mason and Paul Stewart. Picture: Les Smith