

Facility: Junee Correctional Centre
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Totem grows as skills progress

A PIECE of artwork symbolising the connection to the Wiradjuri land will have a place in Wagga's 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 metal working TAFE courses.

"We wanted something here at McAlroy House which acknowledge 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 30cm, but grew

exponentially to 1.3 metres by 1.3m over the six weeks it took to make it.

"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, three have since been released and have 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, and JCC operators the GEO Group matching the inmates donation.



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