

Facility: Junee Correctional Centre  
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# Inmates art impresses Wagga's best

SOME of the region's best known and most respected arts have been awe-inspired by the artistic talents of inmates at the Junee Correctional Centre.

Last week, members of the Wagga Art Society were treated to a visit and tour of the correctional centres incredible Cultural Centre.

A growing respect for the remarkable artistic abilities of men at Junee has paved the way for the Wagga Art Society to establish and enduring friendship with the men at Junee.

Cultural advisor Gerome Brodin said the relationship with the society was sparked after members generously donated art magazines to the centre to aid inmate's art programs.

"After we received the donation we kept in touch with them, and we have been trying to get them to come over and see our artworks and the cultural centre," he said.

"We wanted to do something special for them when they did get here to visit (recently).

"We put on a morning tea for them and showed them the artworks the inmates have done or are working on.

"Some of the Asian inmates performed a dragon dance which was something very special and then we had the choir perform three or four songs and a show by the Military Drummers."

The entertainment line-up gave members of the society a sample of the many worthwhile and life-changing programs the cultural centre offers to inmates.

Some of the programs, including the Military Drumming project, have been initiated by inmates and embraced by the prison population.

"One of the inmates was in an army band and he wanted to teach military drumming," he said.

"We purchase the drums and we now have a band of five who are doing very well at it."

The programs are not only enriching the lives of inmates, but are also helping men discover natural abilities and skills in activities they have never pursued before.

"A lot of these guys who are doing the artworks only learned to paint when they got here because they thought they would give it a go," he said.

"Not only have they found something they enjoy, but many of them are very good at it.

"We have murals all over the walls and even the floors are painted... and we are just about to start on the ceiling."

The inmates are putting their newfound skills to good use, relishing an opportunity to support local charities by donating their works to a variety of projects.

"We donated some artwork about a fortnight ago to the Cootamundra Can Assist Wattle Festival, and we have also recently sent some down to Holbrook for the Rotary Club who are trying to build a playground for the kids," Gerome said.

"We have also donated to the Gundagai Museum.

"The men really like that they are able to give back to the community and help local charities.

"It is really rewarding for them."

The colourful and welcoming Cultural Centre has become a positive and empowering symbol of peace, equality and respect within the prison.

"The artworks in the centre feature the majority of the cultures in the jail and we have deliberately mixed all the different religions, cultures and races together even though it probably isn't politically correct to do so," Gerome said. "We have Islamic men, Pakistanis, men from all the nations in the Pacific Islands, New Zealanders, Asians and men from Vietnam. "We have done it to show all the inmates need to get along and it is one community in here.

"So far it has been very successful."



**CENTRE STAGE:** Junee Correctional Centre inmates perform a traditional Chinese Dragon Dance during a ceremony to welcome members of the Wagga Art Society into the prison's Cultural Centre



**IN GOOD COMPANY:** Members of the Wagga Art Society enjoyed a delicious morning tea at the Junee Correctional Centre during a visit to the Cultural Centre.