

Facility: Junee Correctional Centre
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Inmates create powerful symbol for McAlroy House

A MAGNIFICENT sculpture created by Aboriginal inmates incarcerated in the Junee Correctional Centre has pride of place at Wagga's McAlroy House.

The stunning metal goanna now hangs on a wall in the courtyard at the back of the conference room in McAlroy House – home to the Catholic Diocese of Wagga Primary and Secondary Schools Office.

Aboriginal education officer Kelly Humphrey said the attention-grabbing goanna, the Totem of the Wiradjuri people, is being used to permanently acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which McAlroy house is situated upon.

Earlier this year, Kelly approached Shine for Kids worker and Colourful Dreaming program coordinator Auntie Kath Withers with the staff's vision for the sculpture.

Through her work for Shine for Kids, a charity which provides advocacy and services for the children of imprisoned parents and their families, and implementing the Colourful Dreaming program in the prison, Kath could investigate avenues for the creation of the goanna.

"We put together the concept and took it to Kath because she worked within the prison, and had the inside knowledge of who to approach with the idea," she said.

"She came back and told us that 'yes it can be done'."

Under the guidance of TAFE Riverina Institute teacher Ricky Whybrow, Aboriginal inmates designed and created the impressive sculpture.

"It is a beautiful and magnificent piece of artwork," Kelly said.

"The talent of these boys is nothing short of incredible.

"We actually offered to pay because we were just so happy with it, but they would only accept the money for the material.

"We didn't know at the time, but they then donated that money to the Wagga Base Hospital Children's



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Director of Schools for the Diocese of Wagga, Alan Bowyer, checks out the magnificent goanna sculpture made by inmates at the Junee Correctional Centre. Picture: Alastair Brook

Ward."

Staff at McAlroy House held a special prayer and blessing service last week to mark the history-making arrival of the goanna, and the powerful message of reconciliation it evokes.

"We brought together principals from all the schools in the Diocese of Wagga, along with members of the Aboriginal community and St Joseph's Primary School captains for the blessing of the goanna by Bishop George Hanna," Kelly said.

"We also had a performance from the Holy Trinity dancers which was fantastic."

Kelly revealed the decision to hang the goanna on the wall of the conference room was, in itself, a symbolic move.

"Meeting places for Aboriginal people have always been where celebration, ceremony, learning, family and friendship happen," she said.

"In the same way as the Wiradjuri people have done for thousands of years, our conference room is used as a meeting place for teachers and principals to come together to celebrate, to participate in ceremony, to learn and to present with each other."