

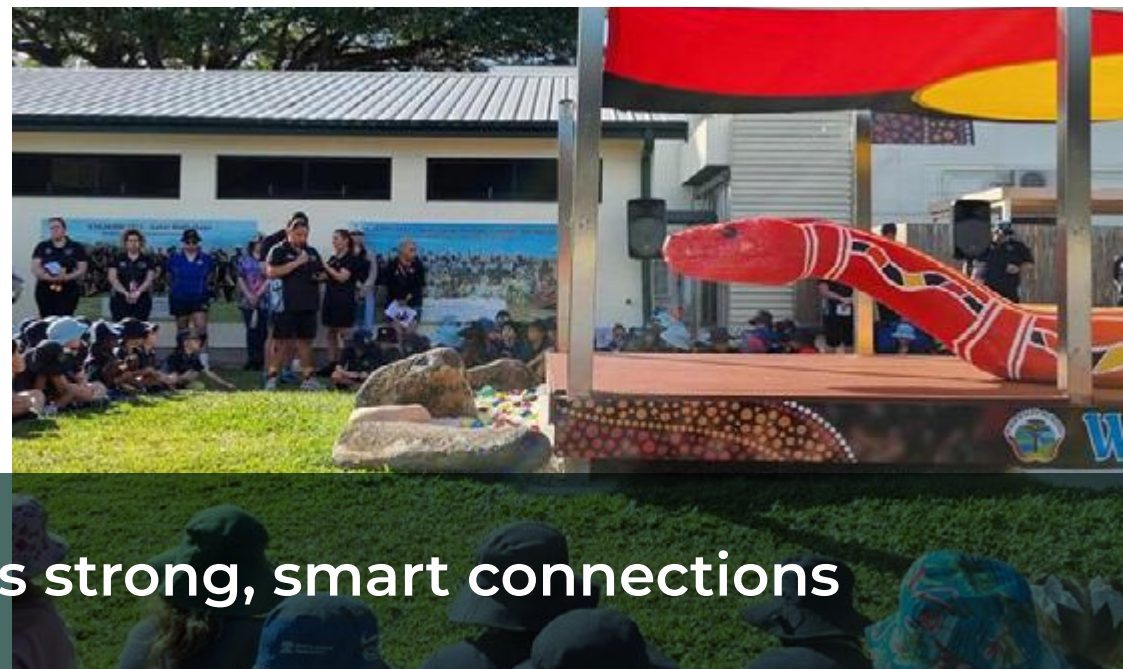
# DREAMTIME SERPENT SCULPTURE, WEIR STATE SCHOOL

Natureworks In action



 Weir State School  592 Ross River Road, Kirwan, QLD 4817, Australia  2022-23

PROJECT CASE STUDY



**School's Dreamtime serpent builds strong, smart connections**





## Connecting to culture through art and stories

The Dreamtime serpent sculpture Natureworks created for Weir State School is much more than a sculpture. It's a distinctive cultural artefact that supports the school's journey, reflects its values, and gives the school community a sense of pride, belonging and connection.

### Supporting the school's journey

Over the last few years, Weir State School has placed increasing emphasis on connecting students to Australia's rich cultural heritage through First Nations storylines. By nurturing relationships with traditional groups and elders, the school embraces First Nations knowledge and traditions in a respectful way.

One of these traditions is the story of 'Gabul', the diamond headed python of the local Wulgurukaba People. In 2021, the school worked with local First Nations people to create an award-winning dance that tells Gabul's story, performed at the Wakakirri festival. The following year, the school was again acclaimed by Wakakirri for its 'Torres Strait Island Celestial Dance' that paid respects to Torres Strait Islander peoples and their ancestors.

Around this time, the school recognised that Gabul would provide a strong visual symbol for the school, so they asked Natureworks to create a giant sculpture of the python. This artefact subsequently became the centrepiece of the school's 'Gabul Gathering' dance/video story in 2023.



The sculpture of Gabul is grounded proudly in the school's Cultural Precinct, and reflects the school's values of "strong, smart, connected". It represents the school's transformational journey – a story of belonging, connection and reconciliation.

*"The artefact has given a strong sense of belonging and worth to our students and wider school community."*

*Our students now proudly articulate to others – I belong to the school where the big snake, Gabul, is."*

Judd Burgess

Principal, [Weir State School](#)



## 'The Gabul Gathering'

In 2023, Weir State School students performed a dance that interweaves the story of the school with the story of the dreamtime serpent, Gabul. This 'Gabul Gathering' performance won national awards for storytelling and reconciliation at the Wakakirri festival. Weir State School have won awards 3 years in a row!

The inspirational Gabul Gathering video connects traditional stories to the school's journey, creating a sense of belonging, connection and reconciliation. Halfway through the video you'll see the dramatic unveiling of Gabul. However, we advise you to watch it all so you can follow this beautifully crafted story from the beginning.



Scan QR code to watch video

This document includes screenshots from the Gabul Gathering video. All media remains copyright of the creators.

<https://bit.ly/gabul-gathering>



## Creating the sculpture

The Dreamtime serpent sculpture is based on a Natureworks giant carpet python sculpture, adapted to suit the school's needs. It has highly detailed scales and features, which you can see in the close-up photographs of the mould and final product. Like most of our sculptures, it is made of sturdy fibreglass, built for strength and made to last.

## Cultural storytelling through art

Rather than painting the snake with realistic carpet python colours and features, our artisans painted it in warm rainbow colours, ready for the school to turn into something special. That transformation happened when local indigenous leader and artist Wesley Stubbings painted the artefact with his impression of a First Nations journey.

The artefact went through stages of story and connection through First Nations storytelling and representation, giving meaning to the storyline prominent in the school's journey.

## The power of cultural artefacts

As this project demonstrates, an inspirational art piece can tell the story of a place, people or journey, creating connections to culture.

Natureworks has always been keen to support projects that promote awareness of cultural and natural heritage. As in this example, we can often adapt existing sculptures to suit your needs. Contact Natureworks to discuss ideas!



The python reflects Weir State School's emblem and motto



The fibreglass python in production



Serpent painted with yellow-orange-red colours



Close-up of carpet python's head



The snake's painted tail



Mould showing detail of snake scales



The final product, with artwork by First Nations artist Wes Stubbings

*"Weir State School cannot thank the team from Natureworks enough for producing a quality piece which has acted as the connective thread to our school success."*

Judd Burgess, Principal, Weir State School