



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **OWEN LYONS – Wiradjuri Artist**

Wiradjuri man Owen Lyons came to creating artworks later in life, using it as a method to help him cope with his sons schizophrenia.

Owen was born and bred in Narrandera in New South Wales, and much of the Wiradjuri country surrounding his home town is the inspiration for the artworks he creates.

Melding traditional indigenous painting techniques and icons, with more modern imagery, the unique blend of style means his artworks reflect a deep connection with both the land, community, his family and other influences.

"I'm one of 10 kids, and we lived in Narrandera at the bottom of the area known as the Sandhills" he reflects. "The corrugated tin sheeted home was affectionately known as "Down the Lane".

"We lived about 250m from the Murrumbidgee River, and I spent so much time down at Koories Beach playing with my siblings and cousins. The Sandhills and the river is important, memory filled place for me."

Owen was self-described as being "a little rowdy" growing up, and spent time with his brother and mates hitting the pubs in town. He travelled working in the shearing sheds far and wide, and had a number of other jobs including at the local school, and with the Challenge Foundation – an organisation for young adults with disabilities. Owen married at 27 and has two daughters and a son, and now has two beautiful grandchildren. He had a kidney transplant around five years ago.

"My son's mental illness is what really lead me to my career in art" Owen said. "I had to find a way to cope with my son's schizophrenia, and art became my outlet to deal with the chaos and havoc that it brought into our home."





Owen found the music of Eminem to be particularly relevant during this time when his son was living at home, and is the basis for artworks that have been created using traditional techniques and imagery of the musician and his songs.

Owen's son is now living independently, and is much loved and returns home regularly for visits.

"I am passionate about helping people who are suffering from mental illnesses or recovering from drug and alcohol abuse, and also helping the carers and families of these people."

One of the ways Owen does is by running art workshops at his Wiradjuri Art gallery located in Wagga Wagga.

The independent art workshops Owen runs are aimed at being a safe and welcoming environment for people who may have mental illness or be in recovery from substance abuse, to assist them in focusing on making art as a creative outlet.

He also has workshops for people caring for or living with those who suffer from mental illness or who are in substance abuse recovery, run to be an artistic relief for carers as well.

The workshops Owen teaches vary in content depending on the groups participating. They range from stretching canvases to be then painted on with traditional indigenous art techniques and imagery, up to going onto country to gather timber to make boomerangs and coolamons to be painted. He also conducts workshops with the indigenous recruits at the defence bases in the Wagga Wagga area, which are incredibly popular and always fully booked.

The focus on mental health is a very unique aspect of the artworks Owen creates, and his workshops provide a connection and support to many people who may otherwise feel like they don't have a way to express themselves.

Owen's artwork has been increasingly sought-after, with some corporate commissions being recently created.





The Wagga Wagga McDonalds store has recently unveiled a large format artwork that has been added to the wall as an overlay. He also was commissioned by the State Member for Wagga Wagga, Dr Joe McGirr, to create a unique artwork that reflects the land with the state district encompasses. (see artwork over page)

Owen is looking to expand the products he is offering to allow more people to access his artworks and designs, and has a number of private and corporate commissions currently booked. He is also working to provide additional art workshops as these are proving incredibly popular for residents in the Riverina area where he resides – and he will be looking to again travel further afield to deliver his workshops once Covid restrictions on interstate and international travel lift.

## CONTACT DETAILS

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ARTWORKS PICTURED:

McDonalds Wagga Wagga Installation



Commission for Dr Joe McGirr, NSW State Member for Wagga Wagga

