



Sculpture to reflect area's landscape

| Courtney Fowler

The concept and design for a large-scale sculpture being built for the town of Paraburdoo was revealed by FIVE last week as part of a two-year pilot project aimed at addressing mental health issues in regional communities across WA.

After months of collaborative work involving artist Alex Mickle, Rio Tinto mine workers and Paraburdoo residents, a design has been developed that references the mining industry, landscape and resilience of Pilbara communities.

Mickle said the sculpture aimed to highlight the unique and beautiful landscape of the Pilbara.

He said the statue's torus shape symbolised the blasting processes used in mining and in the formation of the sculpture itself, which used blast forming to create its steel plate cladding.

"Public art, if done well, always embodies the local environment and responds to the values and identity of a particular community," he said.

"This sculpture is no different in that it carries layers of significance in terms of what it symbolises and how it was made — not least

of which is the land itself. I think that one of the most striking elements of the work will be its upper arch of polished hematite stone."

Mickle said hematite held significance for the town because it was part of the banded iron formation present in the immediate

vicinity of Paraburdoo and was the main element in iron ore, which has had significance for Aboriginal culture for thousands of years, being used as pigment in red ochre paint.

He said loader tyre steel chains covering the upper arch of the sculpture acted as "protective armour" and reflected the community resilience in Paraburdoo.

Rio Tinto Paraburdoo general manager Scott Wilkinson said the sculpture had been a significant undertaking, with design, materials and the final location for its installation based on extensive consultation with the Shire of Ashburton, traditional owners and Main Roads.

"Our aim has been to build a public sculpture that leaves a legacy, not only to the iron ore industry of Western Australia, but also to the people of the Pilbara," he said.

Community members with a range of skills are needed to help finish the work at the Paraburdoo Men's Shed. People with welding, boiler making, automotive bodywork, aluminium fabrication, stonemasonry and general mechanical skills are encouraged to participate.

To get involved with the project, email jacqueline@dadaa.org.au or visit the FIVE website www.five.org.au.



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