



**TRADE SKILLS:** Students Gibson Turner and Fraser Oliver with Marcellin Technical College campus director Pete Chambers.

# Indigenous students in exchange program

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A WEEKLY exchange program between a private school and a technical college is assisting indigenous students to explore careers in a variety of trades.

The five Year 10 students from Santa Teresa - a remote community about 100km from Alice Springs - are boarders at Sacred Heart College.

They also attend Marcellin Technical College once a week to learn about careers in construction, the automotive industry and engineering.

Sacred Heart College principal Dr Paul Hine said it was a situation that had benefits for the school community and added to the visiting students' school experience.

He said having the students in the school had helped educate the school community about indigenous culture and made Sorry Day a meaningful experience for the school's 1000 students.

"Our own Sorry Day here was the most profound I've seen in 30 years of school,"

he said. "The boys took their flag and it was raised in our school and ... because ... indigenous (students) were directly involved the (ceremony) had a new meaning attached to it."

The five students' schooling is broken into three parts: improving literacy and numeracy skills; gaining technical skills and a social education; and living in a community through the boarding experience.

Sport is also a large part of the social experience with the boys playing football for the school and some also taking part in training sessions with clubs in the SANFL.

While homesickness did affect them, Dr Hine said the boys had "surpassed" all expectations.

Every Thursday the boys are taken to Marcellin Technical College with the focus on a different trade each term.

This term the students have been learning some basic mechanical engineering skills through making solid metal dice for board games. During the rotation of trades they have also made a folding table, a steel-

shelf display and a wooden altar.

Marcellin lecturer Stephen Keightly said a memento from each trade they experienced would be a reminder of the different types of skills they learned about.

"You need to spend a few weeks on each of the skill areas rather than skirting on the outside edges of it," he said.

"It gives them a true measure of what the job entails and what's involved with the process itself. They're exploring a brand new concept of learning."

One of the students, Fraser Oliver, said he was enjoying the sessions at Marcellin Technical College.

"I enjoyed learning new things as it's different to the usual stuff that we do at school," he said.

Dr Hine said this was the first time the school had taken a "consolidated block of students" from one community.

At the end of the year each student will have the option of continuing at Sacred Heart College to complete their SACE. He said three of the students have indicated that they hope to return.