



**FINAL PLANNING:** Teacher Michael Hatton (second from right) with GOTAFE students involved in the project (from left) Bronwyn Tossal, Thea McPherson, Moira Watkins, Michelle Lancaster and Sam Monshing.

## Sensory garden planned for psychiatric patient welfare

A SENSORY garden aimed at improving patient welfare is to be constructed at the Kerferd Psychiatric Inpatient Unit at Northeast Health Wangaratta.

The project, to be developed by horticulture students from the Goulburn Owens Institute of TAFE, will be funded by a \$20,000 grant from the Victorian Mental Health Branch.

The primary aim of the garden will be to provide the right setting for women who require care in the High Dependency Unit to meet with their family in a relaxing setting.

GOTAFE horticulture teacher Michael Hatton said that students were already developing a garden design and were hoping to begin work by mid-July.

The design process started in early March, with students taking part in a site analysis of the garden area after being given a formal brief by Kerferd Unit's occupational therapists, Dan-

ielle Taylor and Alison Oaks.

"The aim of a sensory garden is to stimulate the senses," Mr Hatton said.

"The patients are people who have mental health issues and we want to enhance their rehabilitation by creating a safe space that stimulates or calms their senses, memory and mood to improve their well being.

"It's a garden which will have fragrance, different textures, colors, shapes and aromas.

"Different things will stimulate or soothe the senses for different people, and the garden will also have various activities and motivational messages.

"It will be a special place for people to reflect, connect and recover from the worries that sometimes consume us," he said.

The garden construction course will start on July 14 and run every Monday, and local people who would like to assist can contact GOTAFE on 1300 468 233 for more information.