

## The Break Down of the Bourke Distance Education Campus

The combination of these two distinctly different Distance Education centres, Bourke and Walgett was never going to work and 10 years on, the proof is there.

The once vibrant Bourke SODE was the central focus for families in the remote North, South, East and West of this town. Children who lived on properties too far from town accessed this fantastic Distance Education centre that became a hub for learning as well as maintaining a cohesive social fabric amongst isolated families in the District. Families accessing the Bourke DE Centre had much in common, as most were off isolated farming enterprises. The highest priority for all was a quality education for their children, with stimulating face to face lessons via internet, support for supervisors, fast turnaround of marked work and on farm visits by teachers to correctly assess their students as well as timely mini schools in appropriate locations so all could attend.

Since the combination of these two DE Centres, the Bourke Centre has suffered enormously. For the most part, students that use the Walgett Centre are not remote, often choosing to do their education by DE because they find mainstream school difficult, have learning issues or come from mining families near Lightning Ridge. They have very different needs on the whole compared to those who used the Bourke Centre and finding common ground within the classroom created difficulties with delivery of lessons. The huge distances that these two areas draw on is also an enormous disadvantage when planning mini schools. The size of the area is bigger than Tasmania and Parents found travelling to mini schools a long way from their homes daunting. Added to this has been a very apathetic attitude by the Dubbo Area in charge of the Centre, to listen to the decade long list of difficulties that this combined School has created for families that were affiliated with the Bourke Centre. The result has been the total devastation of the remote Community that once was serviced by a fantastic DE Centre in Bourke. Families have not moved away, instead they have accessed other DE Centres- Cunnamulla, Broken Hill or Dubbo to try and gain a better education, for their child. This has many carry on effects. Families feel more remote as many of the Children use different DE Centres and the once social fabric that Education within the Bourke Centre fostered has been ripped apart. Not to mention the added financial pressures put on these families that need to travel further.

The Bourke Walgett SODE needs to be separated to return families to their local area for Education. Doing schoolwork by Distance education is remote enough, without forcing parents to have to make the difficult decision of accessing it further away. A partnership with a local Bourke school is by far a better combination for Bourke DE that linking with another Town, a long way away and so different from itself.

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Panel Member for Interview Process for Principal of BWSODE