

# World's 1st School of Air Turns 70



My name is Amber Driver and I was born in QLD June 1980, then Mum and Dad moved back to NSW where I was raised on a cattle and cropping property with my older sister and younger brother. We were all sent away to boarding school at the age of 12 to complete our secondary school education.

I moved to the NT when I was 19 to work as a Jillaroo out on the Tanami, during which time I met my future husband, John Driver. After about 18 months I made the move out to Elkedra Station to be with him.

I have spent the last 22 years working on Elkedra with the Driver Family. Our two children (Sonny and Ruben) form the 4<sup>th</sup> Generation of Drivers at Elkedra.

Just like their father and grandfather, our children have attended Alice Springs School of the Air for their primary



Ruben Driver, Year 4, ASSOA, in his schoolroom at Elkedra Station

schooling and then made the journey away from home to attend boarding school for their secondary education.

Sonny is currently in Year 11 at St. Peter's College in Adelaide and Ruben is currently in year 4 at Alice Springs School of the Air.

This year Alice Springs School of the Air, the world's first ever School of the Air, is marking a significant milestone - its 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,



John and Amber Driver. John attended ASSOA as did his father

I have enjoyed writing about some of the Driver family stories, that span across the decades, and I am particularly happy that, over the generations, we have seen some huge changes in the delivery of distance education lessons. We've moved on from the old pedal radio that was used for school lessons at Elkedra onto a very sophisticated digital platform – lessons are now taught on the computer, and are delivered to the children with a specially written program tailored for distance education.

This digital platform is called React. This program enables the children to see their teacher, their class mates, access and use an interactive white board, type questions or answers to the teacher, call in and talk to the teacher and much, much more.

It is worth a trip to the 'School of the Air' Visitor Centre, in Alice Springs (located at 80 Head Street), where you can donate to the purchase of library books or pick up some unique merchandise in the gift shop, have a guided tour to see computer lessons take place and immerse yourself in the displays, including watching a video that tells the School of the Air story.

So many families, across rural and remote Australia, are brought closer together as they share the journey of distance education