

**“There used to be a lot of prejudice from kids at school”, says Barry Thorne. “The teachers didn’t really know about it and so didn’t do anything. But the Aboriginal students stuck together and fought it. Now it is no longer a problem.”**

# FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER



*Barry Thorne*

Barry was speaking about his experiences at Walgett where he sat for the Higher School Certificate last year. He is at present studying the general primary school teacher’s course at Armidale Teachers College.

Although he claims “Politics bores me”, Barry is not a person to tolerate prejudice or discrimination. “School principals over the past 4 or 5 years have discouraged prejudice”, he says, “but mainly it is the kids themselves who have put an end to it.”

Barry is one of the first Aboriginal students from Walgett to have completed high school. He was preceded a few years earlier by Michael Anderson.

“The educational level and achievements of Aboriginal students are rising each successive year”, he says.

Barry was born in Sydney but moved to Walgett when he was very young. He was educated at the local central primary and secondary schools. He passed six subjects, including one at credit level, in the School Certificate examination. His results in the Higher School Certificate included second level passes in Science and Geography and passes in Mathematics, English and Economics.

He was school vice-captain in fifth and sixth forms. His interest in sport, including football and participation in the Combined High Schools Swimming Carnival, won him the school’s “Sportsman of the Year” award in 1972.

There are other members of the Thorne family following in Barry’s footsteps. His brother, Darrell, is sitting for the Higher School Certificate this year. His cousin, Neil, also sat for the Higher School Certificate last year and was a prefect in fifth and sixth form. A younger brother, Rodney, is in third year.

Barry’s decision to become a teacher was not made till towards the end of last year. It was a decision partly influenced by the urging of his family and teachers.

His original interest had been local government, which he could have pursued had he so wished. He worked in the offices of Walgett Shire Council over the Christmas holidays.

Barry’s interest in teaching derived from more than simply encouragement by others. “The job itself appealed”, he says. “The idea of communicating and dealing with kids attracts me. Later on I might be interested in secondary teaching.”