

The cost of outback weddings: Country brides and the struggles they face ahead of their big day

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Bride-to-be Stacy Dunne, who lives in Cobar, says it's difficult to plan her wedding while living in the country.

Picture: Nicole McGuire Photography

THE nearest wedding dress shop is a flight away, wedding venue hours by car and as for caterers and florists, well, you better have a big budget.

Having a dream wedding can be a logistical nightmare for country brides who are faced with huge road trips and spiralling expenses when they want to tie the knot.

The average bush wedding costs about \$30,000 but you can add up to \$10,000 in travel expenses to shop for decorations and dresses in the nearest capital city.

Margie Webb, 65, of Weewondilla station, is producing the outback's biggest wedding this month for her daughter Sarah Webb.

Almost half of their 200 guests will be flown from Sydney to Longreach in Queensland via a chartered flight.

"We have to ... there are a lot of people who have to get out here, otherwise they wouldn't come," Ms Webb Sr explained.

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With lots of hard yakka and logistical wizardry, a sandstone hill on the 37,000ha station will be transformed into a luxurious bush reception complete with an amphitheatre decorated with outdoor lights.

“Every single person involved is from out here so the money is going back into the district, which was very important to me. We are in the middle of a drought and businesses are suffering, and that is why we are keen to use everyone out here,” she said.

“We’ve had to build a kitchen at the base of the hill and hire hotplates, cold rooms and sinks with hot and cold running water.”

— ADVERTISEMENT —





Many country brides and grooms have to travel far for wedding goods and services. Amanda Jaques (pictured with her bridal party) was married in Blayney in January.

Valeries Flowers in Longreach is the only place to order floral decorations within 400km.

Owner Brodie Jackson has a roaring trade during wedding season and even though it's more than 1000km from the nearest wholesale flower farm, she ships in large quantities by bus a few days before a wedding.

"We use frozen gel packs to keep them fresh. The only thing we struggle with is meeting the bride's expectations with budgets," she said.

Toowoomba Party Hire sets up hundreds of bush weddings each year and manager Jo Lawrence says the biggest cost is bringing equipment to the property.

They can set up a full-scale reception including marquees, flooring and gas cookers for the kitchen.

"It's easier for brides to come to us because we do everything for them. The next wedding is 1200 kilometres away and because of the distance the equipment will be loaded onto a semi-trailer a week before the event," Ms Lawrence said.



Stacy Dunne is holding her wedding thousands of kilometres away from home to avoid extra costs. Picture: Nicole McGuire Photography

Cobar local Stacy Dunne also faces the same struggles with distance when she ties the knot with Ben Tranter.

To avoid costly marquee rental fees and dusty winds, their wedding reception will be held at Lazy River Estate in Dubbo — a mere 300km away.

The 30-year-old has racked up a travel bill so far of almost \$10,000.

The schoolteacher took annual leave to travel to Sydney to buy suits, decorations and the gown.

“On these trips, accommodation and food adds up. I took time off work to travel seven hours to Sydney to visit as many stores on the same day. I had to pick out my dress and get it altered on the one day so I could get back to work,” Ms Dunne said.

Heather Anschau, Editor of Wedded Wonderland site, says planning a wedding outside of a capital city is a logistical nightmare.

“There’s the extra costs for transporting florals and decor, as well the storage for all,” she said.

“Also, the weather in the country tends to be more extreme. Brides are flying their favourite

Outback wedding

Bride-to-be Stacy Dunne

- Dubbo Wedding venue 300km away from Cobar property
- Travelled seven hours to buy dress in Parramatta
- Racked up \$10,000 in travel expenses
- More than 100 hours spent in car trips preparing event