

Young artist calls for equality for gay people

Erin wants to be able to marry her girlfriend



CAMPAIGN SUPPORTER: Young artist Erin would like the right to marry her partner, just like her five siblings, and wants MPs to have the courage to change the law. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

By **ADRIAN TAYLOR**
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ERIN Dunne is young, vibrant, talented, intelligent and thoughtful. So why does she feel like a second-class citizen?

The 21-year-old fine art student, who hails from a cattle property in Duaringa, was just 17 and the school captain at Rockhampton's The Cathedral College when she came out as gay.

And she says that the Australian Government's refusal to sanction gay marriage cuts deep into her psyche.

"It reinforces that society treats me as different and not worthy of the rights that others take for granted," she said yesterday. "You never forget that."

Erin supports Australian Marriage Equality and a new campaign launched this week which aims to persuade politicians that all relationships should be equal and people of the same sex should be allowed to marry.

"I'm in a long-term relationship and although I'm not ready to marry yet, it's something I would like to do

“ I am from a rural Central Queensland community and I have found no opposition to the idea



EQUAL RIGHTS: Erin Dunne.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

in the future," said Erin.

She says her family is supportive and so was her school but she believes politicians are afraid that if they support same-sex marriage it will cost them votes.

"I think MPs are reluctant because they are scared to step out of line. But I am from a rural Central Queensland community and I have found no opposition to the idea. I went

to a traditional Catholic boarding school and when I came out I got all the support I could have wished for, so this opposition is not coming from the places that some politicians might perceive."

And to those who think that the ban makes very little difference she says that it can be harmful, not just to those couples in loving relationships who want to marry, but



to youngsters in high school who are struggling to come to terms with their sexuality.

"They see the discrimination and they think 'what is wrong with me?'" she said.

Erin is studying at the Queensland College of Art in Brisbane and hopes to make a living as an artist.

And while it might be easier to forge a career in a metropolitan centre like Brisbane or

Melbourne, she's keen to return to Duaringa to live and work.

Members of the campaign have posted stories on MyMarriageStory.com.au and will lobby Federal MPs in Canberra on October 12.

Alex Greenwich, the national convenor, said the campaign was to make MPs aware the issue didn't just affect couples who can't get married, but also their



SINGING COUNTRY: Lynda and Jools Topp. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

NZ Topp Twins win over the opposition

LYNDA and Jools Topp, one of New Zealand's premier music and comedy acts, have been campaigning lesbians since the late 1970s.

Like Erin, the Topp Twins are country girls, born in Huntly in 1958, and according to their official website, grew up singing to cows on the family dairy farm.

They have not confined their activism to championing gay rights.

The Topp Twins came of age as performers in the early 1980s and used their growing fame to lead protest marches for anti-apartheid, anti-nuclear and Maori land rights causes as

well as homosexual law reform.

In 2004, the award-winning comics received the Queen's Medal for Services to Entertainment and in 2008 they were inducted into the New Zealand Music Hall of Fame.

They say their ability to relate to all kinds of people and their gift for humour has helped them conquer any opposition because of their sexuality.

They have toured the US, Canada and the UK and have produced award-winning TV series and a highest-grossing film documentary in New Zealand.

For more details visit topptwins.com.



GAY ICONS: Two of their many comedy characters. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

friends, families and many others.

"Weddings are about love and commitment. They are beautiful events that bring family and friends together to celebrate an expression of love between two people.

"But despite marriage being one of the most important moments in the lives of many people, some

loving and committed couples in Australia don't have the right to marry who they want to marry.

"Men and women from across Australia will head to Canberra to ask why they can't legalise their loving and committed relationship with the person they want to spend the rest of their life with."

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