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WE WON'T BE SILENCED ON MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Posted by Jackie Trad | Oct 5, 2017 | civil-liberties, Community News, Opinion | 0 🗨️ | ★★★★★



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With the Premier at the signing of the formal apology on behalf of the state of Queensland to those convicted of historical gay sex offences.

South Brisbane is one of the most progressive seats in the Queensland Parliament. It's a community of old working class suburbs that over time have formed a unique and vibrant culture of activism, art and academia. Many thought this would mean the anger and vitriolic bigotry of the marriage equality postal survey would seem a world away. Nothing could be further from reality.

Last week, Queensland Police announced they were investigating four separate incidents in my electorate targeting houses displaying Vote Yes materials.

Crimes ranged from swastikas being spray painted on fences to rocks being thrown through windows.

These attacks have horrified me, but I can't say they came as a surprise.

My own electorate office – which proudly displays rainbow signs – was defaced a couple of weeks ago with swastika stickers and just this week a vile anti-gay email was sent by someone pretending to be me.

In an effort to push back and help paint the streets rainbow, I've handed out over 300 "I'm voting Yes" signs since the postal survey was announced. They're up in the windows of around 50 local businesses; they're in gardens and on fences all around South Brisbane.

Almost every day someone comes in to my office in West End and asks for a replacement. Some signs are defaced, others are simply stolen. Despite the willingness of some to deface the property of those they

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disagree with, I have yet to see a single resident proudly display a 'No' sign on their property. That says a lot.

I have no doubt that the majority of people who are voting no are doing so based on genuinely held beliefs, but the vandals who targeted my community couldn't be less genuine.

It's pretty clear they're cowards. They throw rocks and spray symbols of hate in the dead of night, then run away. They post photos of their pathetic group of supporters online – but take care to hide their faces. An activist doesn't hide their face – they stand tall and proud.

The residents who were attacked didn't hide their faces. They don't hide their names. They're standing tall because they know what they're fighting for isn't something that can be taken away by broken glass. The fight for equality doesn't cower at the sight of a poorly painted swastika. In fact, it grows bigger.

But no matter how strong and brave these people are, we can't ignore the fact this debate has caused tremendous pain, fear and division. After all, it was designed to. A vote on the floor of Federal Parliament would have seen this survey avoided entirely, but there was simply a lack of leadership.

I'm proud that Queensland has shown leadership on LGBTIQ+ issues in recent years. Our state governments have historically not been friendly to the LGBTIQ+ community. The relationship has generally ranged anywhere from indifferent to hostile. Our history is shameful, but in recent years we've been determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Since the Palaszczuk Government was elected in 2015, we have reinstated civil partnerships, eliminated age of consent discrimination, removed the archaic gay panic defence, legalised adoption by same-sex couples, moved to expunge historical homosexual convictions, reinstated funding for HIV and AIDS prevention programs including initiating the \$6 million PrEP program which aims to stop HIV transmission by 2020, and introduced state funding for the LGBTIQ+ Legal Service for the first time.

We've achieved each step towards equality with very little community hostility and certainly without wasting \$122 million.

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We didn't need a non-compulsory, non-binding postal survey to tell us what to do – because in a fight between swastikas and rainbows, I know which side I'm on.

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