



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Just Married!

The Joshua's say 'I Do' in Whitsundays' wedding of the year

The saying “there wasn’t a dry eye in the house” rang true for Friday’s Whitsunday wedding of the year. When Newcastle couple Joshua Breakwell and Joshua Starr finally said ‘I Do’ at Paradise Cove Resort, family, friends, contributing suppliers and even attending media couldn’t hold the emotion back.

The wedding – which wouldn’t have been possible without Australia’s ‘yes vote’ on marriage equality last year – saw the Joshua’s walked down an aisle in the sand by their mums, and legally married by celebrant Annie Lloyd-Lewis under an archway facing the Coral Sea.

A \$50,000 giveaway in celebration of marriage equality, the Joshua’s wedding took eight months to plan and was the largest celebration of same sex marriage the Whitsunday region has seen to date. The couple had been planning to marry overseas but winning a Whitsunday wedding meant sharing the milestone with their family and friends.

Early in May the Joshua’s boarded a plane for the Whitsundays on a planning trip to meet the 16 suppliers contributing to the big day.

Everything from the venue to the catering was being gifted by an industry embracing the ‘yes vote’ and what it could mean to a regional economy battered by Cyclone Debbie but with a wedding sector already worth more than \$74 million.

While there may have been a dollar value initially attached to the competition, the Joshua’s quickly won their contributors’ hearts.

In the lead-up they invited 12 celebrities – from Magda Szubanski to Penny Wong – drawing massive attention to the Whitsundays and the opportunities for tying the knot in the wedding heart of Australia.

Their invitation was accepted by fellow Newcastle residents Carly Saunders and Tresne Middleton – the ‘positive pair’ from Channel 7’s MKR, who married in New Zealand prior to the legislative change. The big day was also opened up to wedding media on an annual famil.

Tourism Whitsundays General Manager Tash Wheeler, who hosted representatives from Wed Shed, Dancing With Her, Queensland Brides, The Bride’s Tree and Your Queensland Wedding, said it was “monumental” to be part of the day. “We host a pretty dynamic famil program every year and we get extraordinary feedback on how we showcase the destination because of that – but to be able to feature a real wedding is unbelievable and I think the journalists have been blown away,” she said.

“When you’re standing there – watching two people giving a commitment to each other for life – it’s a moment that touches everybody.”



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Paradise Cove Whitsundays co-owner Julie Telford said to see the wedding finally come to life had been incredible. "All of the suppliers worked tirelessly to get their jobs done and to see the Josh's get married was a very emotional moment for me – I was actually in tears," she said.

"It's been eight months in the making and not only a wedding of two gorgeous people but also our first same sex wedding at Paradise Cove, which is something myself and my husband thoroughly support."

Jess Lawrence from The Wedding Planners Whitsundays and peak industry group WeddingsWhitsundays.com said the day had gone exactly as planned.

"It was everything we wanted and more, and it was great to see the suppliers coming together and just doing what they do so well," she said.

"Because I've got to know the Josh's it was like watching two friends get married and in terms of the attention on the region, I think it's surpassed everyone's expectations.

"I'd like to say a big 'thank you' to the Josh's, to the suppliers and to the media - it wouldn't have been what it has without everyone's contributions."

The Joshua's will now honeymoon in the Whitsundays on a five-night bareboat charter courtesy of Sunsail Whitsundays.

For full coverage of the Joshua's wedding and upcoming honeymoon, follow The Wedding Planners Whitsundays and Paradise Cove Whitsundays on Facebook and Instagram.

What they said...

"It was absolutely beautiful and a pleasure to witness the largest same sex marriage in the Whitsundays yet. It was also great to see the region get together for such an amazing ceremony – everyone was working very collaboratively."

Tegan Dunne, Your Queensland Wedding

"The first thing I took from the day was the genuine, pure emotion between the Josh's. All of the family and guests were thrilled to be there, and it was enhanced by the amazing tropical setting. We were lucky enough to arrive by helicopter – nearly upstaging the guests and grooms. It was an amazing view of the turquoise waters of the Whitsundays and an experience I'll never forget."

Jess Foley, Polka Dot Bride

"What struck me was the diversity of the venue and the region itself – just the array of weddings and elopements you can do – and of course the natural beauty. This has to have been one of the most beautiful ceremonies I've ever seen. The Josh's have obviously gone through the hellishness of the same sex marriage plebiscite and ridden it out together. It was just a spectacular moment seeing them say 'I Do'."

Charlotte Meldrum-Hanna, Wed Shed

"There was just so much emotion. We were fortunate enough to arrive before the guests so we saw the behind the scenes action. The team was a well-oiled machine. Everyone was relaxed and friendly and even the staff had tears in their eyes at the ceremony. It was a real destination wedding where people don't just enjoy an afternoon of celebrations, but have an entire weekend."

Jenny Cooper, The Bride's Tree

"I cannot think of a more perfect way to showcase this region as a destination wedding location. Above all else it was the way the whole community worked together. My lasting impression is that it came off seamlessly and was a great celebration of the legalisation of same sex weddings in Australia, highlighting the Whitsundays as the area to be in. It's going to be hard to go back to reality after this. Being from Queensland I know this region but I've never had this feeling before – I've been blown away."

Nikki Ernst, Queensland Brides

"It was an honour to be there, especially as we're a same sex publication. For us it was really lovely to see a whole community come together – everyone was so supportive. We've gone through a rough trot with the plebiscite so to experience this show of love and be surrounded by wedding professionals who are so supportive, in a beautiful location, was amazing. It is also important to recognise that when the marriage equality vote went through there was a lot of



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marketing towards women, so for us it was really nice to see this wedding go to two men.” – Tara Baker, Dancing With Her

“Actually being in the moment, to see the love being shared between the Joshua’s was very special – just that raw emotion. And I was impressed with the vendors and how calm they were. It felt like a big party, where everyone was celebrating, and that made a really nice vibe.” – Arlia Hassell, Dancing With Her

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