

Trailblazing couple honoured

Pride Seat a perfect symbol of community's fight

Kate Bastians



Peter de Waal sits on the Pride Seat on Darling Street in Rozelle, (AAP IMAGE/Jordan Shields)



Peter Bonsall-Boone and Peter de Waal on their way to the Mardi Gras in 2017, their famous kiss in 1972 and two men receiving a certificate of honour at the Pride Seat dedication

Peter Bonsall-Boone and Peter de Waal on their way to the Mardi Gras in 2017, their famous kiss in 1972 and two men receiving a certificate of honour at the Pride Seat dedication. OUT, proud, colourful, visible.

A Pride Seat dedicated to Peter de Waal and his late partner Peter (Bon) Bonsall-Boone on Darling St, Rozelle, is the perfect symbol for what they fought since sharing Australia's first televised gay kiss in 1972.

"It's wonderful because both Bon and I are Members of the Order of Australia and have other awards at home, hidden from view but this is in a public space," Peter de Waal said.

Despite Bon getting sacked from his job as a church secretary after that famous kiss aired on ABC series *Chequerboard*, the trailblazing couple never stopped trying to increase the visibility and acceptance of the LGBTIQ community.

They were among just a few hundred people brave enough to march in Sydney's first Mardi Gras in 1978, which Mr de Waal described as a "lonely experience". Fast forward to this year's 40th anniversary where about 300,000 people lined the streets in support.

"I just loved walking along the barricades and seeing the big smiles; it's so exhilarating to feel we belong," he said.

The couple were champions of the marriage equality campaign but Bon tragically died in May, 2017, before they were able to fulfil their 50-year dream — just months before same sex marriage was legalised in Australia.

They also set up Phone-AFriend, the first gay and lesbian phone counselling service in NSW, from their Balmain home in 1973.

Bon was an AIDS carer while Mr de Waal worked for a gay and lesbian immigration taskforce to help people bring their partners to and keep them in Australia. They were also foundation members of CAMP NSW.

Those interested in joining a working group to celebrate CAMP's gold anniversary in 2020 can email: teresa.a.savage@bigpond.com.