

Australian Couple's Dream of Eloping Dashed in Italy

By Melissa Coleman

Queenslander Natalie Cleary was due to marry her fiancé Anthony, in romantic Florence, today. It was to be a special day in the couple's love story. They had made the decision to elope and fly to Italy for their destination wedding, only now they are isolated in a hotel room reliant on hotel staff for food, with the Police patrolling the streets below. Their dream wedding looked like something different. It didn't look like a COVID-19 world-wide pandemic, that would see all their planning and hard work resulting in nothing. Ms Cleary who works in Fostering and Kinship in outback Queensland said they took out second jobs to assist with their dream wedding and honeymoon. "Working two jobs is a lot of hard work but we wanted to save enough cash to have a really nice honeymoon and extra spending money. It's a massive disappointment to not be able to marry, something we didn't imagine would not happen." Ms Cleary said the least romantic part about having a wedding in overseas was the very long process of paperwork to have a legal marriage in Italy. "The paperwork only lasts six months so that means if we want to get married next year, we have to do the whole thing again as you have to prove that you haven't been married in the last year." The plan was to travel to Europe with her fiancé on a holiday that would always be remembered and cherished in their hearts. "We have been sitting in our hotel room. Everyone is in lockdown. The doors to the Hotel have been locked. You have to have a reason to be in the streets. Police are patrolling, but everyone is very compliant. It's very quiet outside," she said. Ms Cleary said the Police began patrolling a week before the announcement of the lockdown and their presence only became stronger after the announcement. "The locals don't seem to be too worried or at least they aren't showing their concern to us." "Our accommodation staff are more worried about making sure we are fine and that we know the rules in place. No-one can go to work unless they work at hotels, supermarkets, hospitals or pharmacies," she said. Ms Cleary assured family in Australia that they were feeling well but were upset that their romantic dream of eloping in Florence had been crushed. "We're both disappointed. We were meant to visit three more countries. We had to come on our trip because our travel insurance doesn't cover pandemics, but we didn't think they would stop weddings from happening." "It hasn't fully sunk in yet," she said. Some readers may be wondering why the lovers chose Friday 13th as their wedding date. The usual superstition associated with the day is driving fear of further panic due to COVID-19. However, the Aussie couple believe that love can conquer fear and simply put Ms Cleary said the date runs in succession to other meaningful dates in their relationship. "We met a few years back on the 11th and Anthony proposed one year on the 12th so we wanted to marry this year on the 13th. That way we can have a three-day-long anniversary every year." It looks like the couple will have to add another chapter into their love story. IMAGES SUPPLIED ON REQUEST