

## **LGBTQIA+ INCLUSION**

### *Statement*

**HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan)** [6.28 pm]: I also stand to talk about LGBTQIA+ community issues. I ask the government, which has a large majority in both houses, to get on and do what it has promised this community it would do for a long time. One of the reasons I am standing up is that I heard the Labor government's recent announcement that it has a new strategy for LGBTQIA+ inclusion. When people from the OUTinPerth publication recently asked Hon Hannah Beazley, MLA, whether the strategy would be supplemented by the law reform for which the community has been calling for a long time, she said, and I quote, that she did not want to pre-empt what comes out of its development.

Frankly, I am pretty tired and frustrated at seeing this can continually kicked down the road, and I know that many others in the community are too. I want to add my voice in the chamber today to the voices of advocates, including TransFolk of WA, Intersex Peer Support Australia, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex Rights In Ageing (GRAI) Incorporated, Living Proud, Just.Equal Australia, Equality Australia and Rainbow Futures WA, which have all urged the government to follow through on its promised law reform. I am concerned that this new strategy will be another excuse for the government not to act now in this term of Parliament before another election cycle. Remember, this commitment goes way back to the election in 2017—almost eight years ago. Since that election, we have had a Labor government, and for the last three years, the Labor government has had a huge double majority in both houses, yet we still have not seen action on this.

The outdated legislation continues to affect LGBTQIA+ lives daily. In WA at the moment, religious schools still hold a licence to discriminate against LGBTQIA+ staff and students, harmful conversion practices that seek to change sexual orientation and gender identity remain legal, the process for trans and gender-diverse people to legally update their gender remains the worst in the country, surrogacy laws make altruistic surrogacy unavailable to people who are not women or heterosexual couples, and intersex babies and children continue to be subjected to deferrable medical interventions without their personal consent. Sometimes I think these things appear abstract to us, so, keeping that in mind, today I want to read some stories from people in our community whose lives are being impacted on a daily basis by this government's inability to act on its own commitment to reform pathways to gender recognition, end conversion practices and protect LGBTQIA+ people from religious discrimination in schools and organisations.

When we reached out to the community, we were overwhelmed with responses. I am sorry that I cannot read them all today. I will read only three today, but I will read some of the others at a later time. The first response I want to read is from Benji, who, according to my notes, writes —

As a queer trans person going into my 9th year of transitioning, I've given up vying for the government to see me.

When I came back to Perth 5 years ago, it should have been relatively easy for me to be approved by the Gender Reassignment Board and be marked as adequate for their classification of a man. I met all the punitive binary standards they asked for—here's the evidence that I've had Hormone Replacement Therapy, Surgery, letters from a psychologist, an endocrinologist and my GP, here are even the bio-markers in my blood to prove to you that I lie within your acceptable range of male.

It's horrendous thinking back on it, I was so desperate to be seen, to belong to this crowd, that I let wider parts of my queerness die in the background. I couldn't be anything other than the binary, and I couldn't live if I was Female, so I had to at least be marked as Male. But I wasn't.

They told me they needed more, they needed detailed letters from friends, family, and one must come from someone who wasn't a friend or family and knew me for at least 12 months. I was stunned, horribly crushed, freshly 19 but much smaller and younger in that moment.

Who are you when your government decides you don't exist? I decided then, and I carry it now, that I make the rules about who I am—actually. I never replied, and I ticked male on government applications anyway. What, would they arrest me? They imprisoned me anyway—to make it physical would just be laughable. I decide who I am, and it is the only thing they cannot take from me.

Another one is from Mys Alexandria and, again according to my notes, states —

Dear Members of Parliament

Four years into my transition, I feel more myself than I ever have, but on every legal form lays a lie; "Mr Alexandria".

Do I want it changed? Of course! But who gets to judge if I'm trans enough to change it?

Is it the man who attacked me at Woodbridge station, or the one that groped me in Northbridge last week; I was certainly woman enough for them.

My body is treated as nought but an object on a daily basis and there's nothing I can do about it, because the Board has to deem if I'm "trans enough" to be a woman. Are the hormones not enough, is my wardrobe not enough, what about me makes you get to judge who I am, because of the way I was born? What makes you get to drag your feet on something you promised to get rid of before I even started to transition? I didn't choose to be trans, but you chose to give up on me.

Sincerely, Mys Alexandria

Finally, Lorien Watts, who wrote, according to my notes —

My name is Lorien.

I have known I was nonbinary since I was 17, although I would likely have realised sooner if I'd had the language. Almost 5 years later I am out to everyone in my family and community, and I am undergoing medical transition to feel comfortable in my body.

If I was a binary trans person I would be able to change my gender legally—but it's not just the humiliating process of the gender reassignment board that presents a barrier to me, but the fact that under the current policy, i do not even have an option to choose my nonbinary gender.

Psychologists have viewed gender as separate from sex since the 1950s, and nonbinary genders have existed in cultures across the globe for thousands of years. Regardless of your own personal opinions of nonbinary people, we are in your community. I am in your community, and it is your responsibility to serve me as my elected representatives. It is to my shame that we are the last state in the country that has not recognised nonbinary genders, despite promises to do so.

How long will we have to keep waiting?

I want to thank those three individuals—Benji, Mys Alexandria and Lorien—for sharing their stories with me and allowing me to share them with members in this place today. There will be more stories from other community members and I look forward to sharing them soon.

It is not the funding or the strategy itself that I am criticising. Hon Hannah Beazley said in her government media statement —

“We know that young LGBTQIA+ people are far more likely to face discrimination and exclusion, which is completely unacceptable in 2024.

I agree. It is unacceptable for anyone in the LGBTQIA+ community to face discrimination, so I ask the government: are you really going to make the people we have heard from tonight wait many more years for law reform? Please show some leadership and act now, before the next election.