

ALBANY PRIDE FESTIVAL — CITY COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

Statement

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [6.20 pm]: I rise tonight to make a few comments about Pride to reflect on the importance of celebrating Pride, but also to give an example of why events like Pride are still very important. As we know, Pride is very important to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in our community. Pride came about following peaceful protests to open the eyes of the community to see that both gender and sexuality are fluid. Pride is about reclaiming the spaces that had been denied to our community for many years. We were demonised, harassed and discriminated against. To me, Pride is very much about education, but it is also about bringing people together. We all know that there are a lot of parties and celebrations on Pride weekends, and so we should celebrate as we have fought as a community for a very long time for rights—most recently, of course, for marriage equality.

This weekend, a number of Pride events will take place in Albany on the south coast and up in Broome. I will head up to Broome on Friday and I will be participating in some of those events, proudly supporting them with a number of my colleagues from this place and the other place. I particularly want to spend some time to talk about Albany Pride. It has not always been easy for the crew and organising committee down at Albany Pride, and I want to acknowledge and thank them for their hard work over many years to organise the event and bring it together. They have faced opposition from community members, church groups and even businesses, would members believe? A lot of people from Perth are travelling down to Albany this weekend to participate. They will be spending money at local shops and for accommodation and they will be participating in all the events. It makes sense to have a Pride event in your town; it brings tourism and adds to the diversity and economic vitality of your region.

It was great to see that for the first time this year, the City of Albany stood up and said, “We support Albany Pride.” It took some time, but it was great to see that the City of Albany has signed on as a sponsor of Albany Pride this year. I understand that at last night’s council meeting, it was a topic of conversation.

I bring members’ attention to an article posted on ABC news earlier today entitled “Albany councillor Thomas Brough slammed for homophobic comments during week of pride”. Of all the times to make these types of comments, he chose to make them on the eve of Pride in Albany. The article goes on to state that Thomas Brough falsely claimed that paedophiles were welcomed in the LGBTQIA+ community. His reasoning for that is that the LGBTQIA+ is a coalition and that paedophiles are welcome. This is why events like Pride are so important; we need to educate people like this Albany councillor. To make matters worse, he continued his views on radio this morning. He stated —

“I just think we’re talking about a broad coalition,”

...

“People are rightly concerned about some of the people who come into that coalition.

“I’m not interested in what people get up to in the bedroom — it’s none of my business.

“However, incorporation of people who are adults sexually attracted to children, minor-attracted persons, is a cause for concern if you’re adding them into a coalition.”

Well, I am sorry; they are not welcome into the coalition.

I had never heard of this gentleman before, so I did a bit of googling. He has form; he has made comments previously. The City of Albany formed a Youth Advisory Council back in 2022 and the group was asked to design a logo to best reflect the group. It came up with a logo. It is a puzzle with four pieces and represents the LGBTQIA+ community, Indigenous Australians, the culturally and linguistically diverse community and those living with disabilities. When it came to debate in council, all the councillors around the table praised it and were supportive—all except Councillor Brough, who said that the logo was a waste of ratepayers’ money. He continued —

“You can’t genuinely demonstrate inclusivity and valuation of human uniqueness with a logo,” ...

“This logo politicises identity characteristics such that, in a quest to become inclusive, it becomes an epitaph for Animal Farm: all citizens are included but some citizens are more included than others.”

Councillor Brough, we have fought very long and hard for our rights, our equality and for marriage equality and just to be able to reclaim the spaces that we have been denied for many years. That is why these logos and these events are very important. I continued to google as I was listening to debate this afternoon to really get a better understanding of this gentleman. I understand that he is an emergency medicine doctor down at Albany Health Campus. I also discovered that he is a member of the Liberal Party. I also discovered that he is shortlisted or has intentions to run at the 2025 state election for the seat of Albany. That is a real concern to me, and it is a real concern to the LGBTQIA+ community.

I have been corresponding today with the member for Albany, Rebecca Stephens. Her office has received quite a number of calls and emails from concerned constituents about this particular individual’s comments. I want to read

one of the emails that she received today. Of course, the gentleman who sent this email has asked that his identity be withheld, and I think we can all understand why: he is fearful of this individual. According to my notes, he writes —

Hi there,

I'm a law abiding, tax-paying and pretty boring gay man who happens to spend a bit of time in your catchment area.

Can you please let me know how I or any of my friends can feel safe presenting to your emergency department now we know one of your clinicians think we're paedophiles or that we condone paedophilia?

Members of the LGBTIQ+ community already experience worse health outcomes than other Australians.

This kind of stuff only makes it worse.

People won't seek care or treatment and if they do, the issue will be more advanced and harder/impossible to treat as a result of it.

What is Albany Hospital going to do to ensure members of the LGBTIQ+ community know that they can present to hospital and know they will receive the care and treatment they need which is free of discrimination and homophobia?

I am sure this gentleman is not alone in being fearful to present himself to the hospital due to this individual. The ABC news article shows the councillor's face. The councillor's face can be seen on the city's website. I am sure a member of the community who rocks up to Albany Health Campus and sees this individual's face will be extremely fearful of what that individual thinks of them. I did a little bit more searching on the City of Albany website, and there was a little bio or profile about this councillor. It states —

Values important to Cr Thomas —

Sorry, Brough —

include sustainability, an orientation towards strengthening local communities.

The platform he ran was to strengthen local communities. I am sorry, but comments like that seek only to break down and divide communities. They are shameful and they should be called out.

I would like to finish up by showing my massive support to the LGBTIQ+ community right around WA, but in particular in Albany. I understand that quite a large number of events are planned for this weekend. I wish everybody the very best. I congratulate the City of Albany for getting behind it. I also acknowledge and thank the local member, Rebecca Stephens, who is also supporting this weekend's events. I understand that her office window is decorated appropriately for this weekend's celebrations. I say to the Liberal Party members in particular: be very careful who you preselect this year because we are watching.