

ALBANY PRIDE FESTIVAL — CITY COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

Statement

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.37 pm]: I rise tonight to support the very heartfelt comments made earlier by Hon Peter Foster in which he outlined the dreadful situation that we again face in Albany. I do not know about anybody else in the room, but I could hear the distress and hurt in the honourable member's voice when he spoke tonight. I will stand in support of him and everyone who will celebrate Pride over the next week, particularly in Albany. I will stand up to Councillor Thomas Brough and the misinformed, wrong and quite bizarre statements he made over the last short period of time. I join the chorus of opposition to what he said are his views and beliefs. He made outrageous references to there being a connection between paedophiles and our good friends in the LGBTQIA+ community.

Last year, I went to Albany for the Pride celebrations. Hon Dr Sally Talbot was also there. I went down there at the request of my good friend Darren Moir, a farmer from the Borden area. I was picked up from the airport by the best chauffeur in Albany, Tiger Bird, and we had a great night. I met some wonderful people that night. I showed them support from someone who is outside the LGBTQIA+ community, and I did that for a few reasons. The first was that I obviously knew some of the people involved in Albany Pride and was happy to be part of the event in the absence of the fabulous Rebecca Stephens, the member for Albany, who was away at the time. I did it to show that there was support from outside the community and that the majority of the broader public are supportive of Pride events.

We need only look at the broad spectrum of people who participate and choose to get involved in and support these events. We appreciate the work that Councillor Brough does as a doctor. We will thank him and acknowledge him for that, but his views on this subject are way off the mark and are wrong. I encourage him to think again about some of those views and educate himself about the reality. It is ridiculous to suggest that that link exists. I grew up in a town with a paedophile priest. We can look everywhere for this criminal and abhorrent behaviour, so why would he look only in that corner of the community? I encourage the councillor to seek some better advice. I acknowledge the Mayor of Albany. Although he called Councillor Brough a good councillor—I am struggling to see how that could be the case—the mayor condemned the comments Councillor Brough made. I also acknowledge the Leader of the Liberal Party, Libby Mettam, for her assessment of the comments as bizarre. I think she is absolutely right about that.

The councillor doubled down again this morning when he was questioned. I thought that was an opportunity for him to perhaps reflect on and accept that he was wrong on this point. As Hon Peter Foster said, this person is a member of the Liberal Party. I hear that he would like to have his name on the ballot paper next March when the voters go to the ballot box to elect the next member for Albany. I wholeheartedly hope that the next member is Rebecca Stephens. Perhaps I should encourage the Liberal Party to preselect someone who is out of touch with modern views in the community. This situation is also concerning to me. As if the week has not been difficult enough for the Liberal Party, this certainly has not been helpful.

The councillor is wrong. It is very hurtful and distressing to many people to make the comments that he made today. I think he should reflect on them, retract them and engage in the celebration of Pride, and particularly the Albany Pride Festival, because it is a wonderful event. He might learn something and perhaps appreciate that we are all different. We can all be who we are and we should all be loved. Perhaps he might just enjoy the fabulous Pride celebrations. On that note, I am proud to support Hon Peter Foster. He is a wonderful advocate for Pride Week and, more broadly, I think many members appreciate his work in this space.

I wish everybody, right across the state, a happy Pride.

House adjourned at 6.43 pm
