

TRANS AWARENESS WEEK

Statement

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [5.20 pm]: This week is Trans Awareness Week. The aim of Trans Awareness Week is to raise awareness and visibility of the transgender community through advocacy and education. Trans and gender-diverse Western Australians suffer high rates of violence, homelessness, poverty, sexual assault and healthcare discrimination. Did members know that 96 per cent of trans and gender-diverse young people have experienced discrimination due to their identity? Did members know that 90 per cent of trans and gender-diverse young people will experience depression, compared with just 15 per cent of the general population? It is crucial that safe spaces and resources are available and accessible to our trans and gender-diverse community across WA to both empower them and protect them from harm.

When leaders such as members in this place use inclusive language, the rate of social exclusion of our gender-diverse and trans community is halved. We all have a role to play. Trans Awareness Week is a chance for us to celebrate the wonderful trans and gender-diverse community, and it is also the ideal time to educate ourselves and those around us about gender diversity and the importance of being a trans ally.

I would like to acknowledge the great work of TransFolk of WA. I recently had the privilege of meeting the chair, Hunter Gurevich, and some of the committee and membership, at a fundraising event. Hon Stephen Dawson and Hon Lorna Harper also joined us at that event. It was both humbling and, at times, upsetting to listen to the stories of the discrimination, violence and adversity that they suffer just by living their lives. I am thankful to TransFolk of WA, which provides vital support services to transgender people right across WA, and even in the regions. Its purpose is to inform, empower and advocate for the trans and gender-diverse community so that they both survive and thrive. It runs a number of online groups; it promotes the health and wellbeing of the trans and gender-diverse community by maintaining a list of friendly medical providers; it hosts an online register of resources and brochures; and it operates a free and low-cost binder program. TransFolk of WA is even running a trans 101 course this week as part of Pride WA's PrideFEST. It will share information on what it means to be trans and gender-diverse, and share ways in which we can all be more inclusive. TransFolk of WA's vision is for all trans and gender-diverse people to be valued and empowered members of our communities. This is a vision that I share, and I hope members of this house will join me in doing so.

As members may be aware, November is PrideFEST month across Perth, and a large number of events are being organised by Pride WA. As a community, arts and cultural organisation, it is Pride WA's mission to promote and encourage the community, culture and artistic expression of all people of diverse sexuality and gender living in Western Australia, and to provide a platform for the celebration of that community, their talent and culture, as they continue to champion their rights and freedoms. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Pride WA for its good work. The organisation is run by volunteers, with very minimal paid staff, who put in many hours organising a considerable number of events right across Perth in music, arts, TEDx Talks, health and wellbeing workshops and book events, as well as the upcoming annual street parade, which returns to Northridge this year. I attended the PrideFEST Fairday on Sunday in Hyde Park, along with a number of members of Parliament from both this house and the other place, which was fantastic to see.

I believe this sends a strong message to the LGBTQIA+ community that members of Parliament show their support every day, but particularly during this special month.

On Tuesday this week, we celebrated five years since Australia said yes to marriage equality, when almost two-thirds of Western Australians voted for change. Like many, I remember that day very well. I woke up early, turned on the television and waited for the results. I was anxious because what if Australians said no? What would that mean? Was my relationship not valued? Was I not equal? How would it affect our son, who was only three years old at the time?

When the results were read out, I cried. I cried with happiness because Australians said yes to equality. They voted for fairness. They voted for love. They voted for change. I think it is important to reflect on this, because the views of Western Australians have certainly evolved over the years, and I particularly hope that the views of Western Australians on our transgender and diverse community evolve. Words and actions matter. Anti-trans rhetoric fuels hate crimes.

This Sunday is Transgender Day of Remembrance. Although I will not personally be able to attend the candlelight vigil that will be held, I will most certainly light a candle and honour the lives of those lost to transphobia and violence in 2022. I will stop and reflect on the lives that have been lost, reflect on our community's strengths in the face of adversity and recommit myself to fight transphobia to create a better, safer and more inclusive world for everyone.