

TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY

Statement

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [5.19 pm]: Trans Day of Visibility is celebrated every year on 31 March to raise awareness and visibility of trans and gender diverse people and their experiences. This day is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements and contributions of trans and gender diverse people to society. This is a community that has historically faced marginalisation, discrimination and violence. Trans people are often subjected to social exclusion, economic inequality and, horribly, physical and emotional abuse. Trans and gender diverse people are also more likely to experience mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. At the same time, they face significant barriers to accessing health care and other services.

Trans Day of Visibility is an important opportunity to celebrate and uplift the voices and experiences of trans and gender diverse people. It is a chance to acknowledge the resilience and strength of trans people in the face of systemic inequality. I accept that it is difficult for some to grasp how important visibility and representation are unless they belong to a group that has been denied them. Our culture is soaked in representations of heterosexuality, whiteness and cisgenderism, but it is rather difficult for people to notice this if they happen to be heterosexual, white and cisgender. Why should they? They can see aspects of themselves reflected everywhere. Most of us do not have to try to find representations of ourselves in the media or public life. It is just there. It is just the way things are. Seeing people in the media and in public life whom we can strongly identify with reinforces our sense of self, providing positive role models and a feeling of fitting in. It helps us work out who we are and what we want without us having to do anything. It gives us someone to look up to. Visibility is about making sure that everyone has someone to look up to.

Trans Day of Visibility is also an opportunity to highlight the contributions of trans people to society. Trans people have made important contributions in fields such as art, science, politics and activism. By celebrating these achievements, we can help to promote positive representations of trans people in the media and public consciousness, and challenge harmful stereotypes. But visibility alone is not enough to address the challenges faced by the trans community. It is important to recognise that trans people continue to face significant barriers to access health care, education, employment, housing and other essential services. This in turn leaves many trans and gender diverse people at much greater risk of poorer health outcomes.

Discrimination and violence against trans people still exists. Around the world—although I am very proud to say not here in Western Australia—legislative efforts to restrict trans people’s human rights are on the rise. Trans Day of Visibility should be a call to action for allies and supporters of the trans community. We must accompany visibility with concrete action to support trans rights and equality. Our schools and workplaces must be welcoming and inclusive of trans and gender diverse people. We must support trans-led organisations such as the amazing team at TransFolk of WA, and we should challenge transphobic attitudes and behaviours when they arise.

Two weeks ago, outside this Parliament, there was a demonstration, poorly attended I might add, against the human rights of trans and gender diverse people. I will not dwell on the misconceptions that drove the organisers of that protest. Thankfully, my colleague Hon Dr Sally Talbot has already given this chamber a perfectly worded demolition of the motivations and ideology behind that protest. Instead, I want to reflect on the response inside this building. The response from the overwhelming majority of my colleagues was an outpouring of support for our trans and gender diverse community. That kind of support is what everyone deserves when their right to merely exist is called into question.

It would be remiss of me not to reflect upon the actions of one member of this place who chose to stand with the anti-trans protesters earlier this month. I want to further acknowledge and thank the other members of that member’s party who distanced themselves from that member’s stance. That includes members of Parliament and candidates from that same party in Victoria and New South Wales. That same member attended PrideFEST Fairday last year and co-hosted a stall with party members, and her actions earlier this month really call to question her support for the LGBTQIA+ community. I suggest that she reflects on this and I hope that the organisers, Pride WA, re-evaluate further stall requests from that particular member.

It was disappointing, but not surprising, to read an article in *The West* this week in which another member from this house chose to lend their support to the Victorian member of Parliament who chose to attend an anti-transgender rally in Victoria. *The West* quoted from an email that this member is purported to have sent to supporters. In reference to the member’s letter, the article reads —

... she was “rightly” speaking out on “the injustices against women who are being forced to include trans women in female only change rooms and sports, and calling for an inquiry into gender transition practices.”

It is a shame that *The West* did not bother to ask the Leader of the Liberal Party whether she supports this member’s anti-trans comments made in the same article—they seem to ask her views on everything else. I call upon the

Leader of the Liberal Party to clarify whether she supports the member's anti-trans views as we approach Trans Day of Visibility.

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of attending Sydney WorldPride and as part of that event, over 50 000 people walked over the Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of the LGBTQIA+ community. I also got to watch the Mardi Gras parade down Oxford Street and it was uplifting to see the support displayed to our LGBTQIA+ community, especially to our trans and gender-diverse community, including our trans kids who are now under threat.

Visibility is a crucial aspect of promoting and understanding our transgender people. By increasing visibility and awareness of trans experiences, we can challenge harmful stereotypes and misconceptions, and promote empathy and understanding. Greater visibility will eventually lead to greater social acceptance and support for our trans people, and that is something that we should all support. A society in which we can all be visible without fear or stigma, is a society that we can all be proud of.