

IDAHOBIT

Statement

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [6.20 pm]: Today, 17 May, is IDAHOBIT—the international day against homophobia, biphobia, intersexism and transphobia. It marks the anniversary of the day the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from the international classification of diseases in 1990.

IDAHOBIT raises awareness about discrimination and violence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people around the world. It seeks to challenge discrimination and prejudice based on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex variations, and calls for an end to discrimination in all its forms. We have made great strides in doing this. I am especially proud to be part of a government that has committed to further removing discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people through reforms to the Equal Opportunity Act and the Gender Reassignment Act, as well as taking decisive steps to ban so-called conversion therapy in the wake of the inquiry into the Esther Foundation.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their continuing support of their LGBTIQ+ constituents. I am very proud to see many of my colleagues wearing rainbow ribbons in the chamber this evening.

Everyone deserves to be their true self and to live openly without fear of violence or discrimination. Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go before everyone feels free and safe to live their lives openly. Pride WA reports that 63 per cent of LGBTIQ+ employees in Australia are not out to their work colleagues. Two-thirds of LGBTIQ+ youth have experienced abuse due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex characteristics, and 35 per cent of LGBTIQ+ Australians have experienced verbal abuse just in the last 12 months.

As the march towards a more equal and inclusive society has become more determined, the voices against us have grown louder, their rhetoric is becoming more extreme and their attempts at creating fear and division are more blatant. Although these people are curiously unmotivated by the real challenges of bringing up children in 2023, they are only too happy to come up with completely imaginary ones. That is why the biggest problem facing our kids at the moment, apparently, is drag queens. The risks posed by climate change, insecure work and cost-of-living pressures are nothing apparently compared with the sheer horror of a drag queen reading a story to a child.

President, I doubt there is any drive fiercer than a parent's instinct to protect their child from harm. My partner and I would certainly do anything in our power to keep our son safe. It is that instinct that people seek to exploit. They need people to buy into the myth that LGBTIQ+ people being seen in a positive light is a threat to the safety of children. We have heard it all before and I am sure we will hear it all again. But the truth is that every LGBTIQ+ adult was once a child. As adults, we remember what it was like growing up in a world that was much less accepting and inclusive. That world is gone. We have moved on from that. We are not going back. Another thing they forget is that there are also parents of LGBTIQ+ kids. That same fierce instinct to protect is present in all of them too—parents who love, support and accept their kids for who they are and who want to keep them safe and who will not stop until they are safe from prejudice and discrimination and protected from the real risks to their safety and their future. That is what all parents want.

The time when folks seriously believed LGBTIQ+ people represented any kind of threat to society is long over. Western Australia left it behind and never looked back. We have been moving towards acceptance and inclusivity ever since—equal rights and equal dignity, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex characteristics. As a proud gay man, as a member of a party that fights for equality and also as a proud parent, I promise you this: we will not stop until we get there.