

**PRIDEFEST**

*Motion*

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [11.32 pm] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council —

- (a) joins with the community in celebrating PrideFest 2023;
- (b) acknowledges the positive messaging these types of events send, particularly to our youth; and
- (c) commits to achieving equality for all our constituents.

Acting President, happy PrideFest. Members, happy PrideFest. I wish those words were as magical as I feel they are, and the prejudice in the community would be wiped away just by wishing people happy PrideFest. Unfortunately, we are not quite there yet. The way I understand the word “pride” in this context is the promotion of self-affirmation, dignity, equality and increased visibility of LGBTQIA+ people as a social group that is deserving of our respect and, particularly, kindness, which we should give to all social groups in our community.

I worked in retail and hospitality in the 1970s and 1980s. It was at a time when there was a worldwide push for pride. I worked in a store called Aherns, and I am now getting old enough that I have to explain what Aherns was. Aherns was a department store very similar to David Jones, which actually bought out the Aherns store. Aherns was a department store owned by a Western Australian family, the Ahern family. It had five stores, and I was happy to work in one of those stores. The first job I had in the city store was selling ladies’ shoes, because Aherns was a very, very high fashion department store. I worked with a range of people in that store, and because we had high fashion, many diverse people, including gay men and lesbian women, worked there. So I was exposed at a very early age to their great company.

I also worked a second job in hospitality. I worked at Bouzoukia, which was an old Greek restaurant in Northbridge. Again, I am showing my age; it is no longer there. It was a second job for me and so I worked on Friday and Saturday nights. When we finished work, we would often head off through Northbridge to some nightclubs, and I am very happy to say that disco was very prominent.

**Hon Darren West:** Where you a good dancer, member?

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** I was a lousy dancer, but anyway!

**Hon Tjorn Sibma:** You were a belly dancer?

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** A lousy dancer! I had to correct that interjection!

I used to visit three nightclubs. One was Pinocchios, and it was not filled with liars! That is a very bad grandad joke, but anyway. Another one was Beethoven’s, and that did not play classical music! The other one I used to visit was Connections.

**Hon Ayor Makur Chuot:** It is still there.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Yes, I think it still is.

I was a straight man visiting a nightclub that used to have very good music and was very friendly, and you were welcome. The community there was very welcoming. If you were a straight guy and just wanted to go in there and dance, have a few drinks and finish off the night, people were very welcoming. If you got a pass, you turned it down and you felt good because you got a pass, but people were also very respectful, and they knew that other people in the community would go to that nightclub.

Safe to say, I was very familiar with the gay community from that age. Other people of my vintage probably were not as exposed. As I mentioned before, in the 1970s there was a push by the community to become visible, accepted and loved. There was pushback during that time. At that time, the pushback was probably physical. It was well before the internet, so if an obviously gay man walked down the street in those years, he would have felt nervous because there may have been a physical reaction to his pride in being gay, and that really is a shame. I have always fought for social justice, and those sorts of events used to hurt dramatically.

Also, people of my vintage are a product of their pasts, so I often fall into bad habits. One of the bad habits I have is to use traditional language that I feel comfortable with but that others may not. People need to try to improve, and I do. The other day I was picked up because I was talking about manning my office. To me that had no connotation at all, but to other people it does. It is just as easy to say “staffing the office”. People of my generation particularly fall into old habits. I often get picked up because I stand back and allow other people to enter a room or go through a door before I do, but I do that for men and women. There is no point of distinction in my eyes; it is just the way

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I was brought up and something respectful to do. But people need to be aware that we are in a period in which we are trying to become better at many things, and that is one way we can try to do that.

I was exposed to the gay community at a young age and I felt very comfortable with gay people. They were very good friends of mine, mainly from Aherns. I very much enjoyed their company. My eldest daughter, Jessica, is in a same-sex relationship. I have one regret. I cannot remember when my other daughter, Danielle, introduced me to her beau to whom she is now married and has a child with. I cannot remember that because, way back then when we were first introduced, I had no idea that it was going to be a significant partnership. It has grown into a beautiful partnership and I have a beautiful grandchild from that partnership. I never knew at that time how significant it was going to be, so I have some regret about that.

I more so have regret that I cannot remember my daughter, Jessica, bringing home her partner, Lucy, who is gorgeous; I call her another one of my daughters. I cannot remember when she introduced me to Lucy, and that is a bit of a regret. It was not a thing for me or my wife that she brought home a woman. It was not an issue. I often look back on that time with regret because I do not remember it. I wonder how significant it was for Jessica to come into our home for the first time and openly declare that she has another woman as a partner. I look on that with some regret because I feel it was probably much more significant for her. I suppose if I asked her, she might say she remembers it, but I do not remember it.

The evolution of PrideFest can be tracked back to the early days of March 1989. There was a march to the steps of Parliament House and a demand for homosexuality to be decriminalised. I am pleased to say that that demand was agreed to by this good place in 1990 when homosexuality was decriminalised. Pride developed to become PrideFest, and as that has developed and grown, there seems to be more acceptance within the community as a whole. Although there have been mistakes—that is something I freely accept and ask forgiveness for—generally the population is moving forward and we are getting to a better space. We are not there yet. As I said, happy Pride; I wish we could get there that easily but we cannot. But we are getting there, and that is important.

Going back to my daughter, I will give a shout-out to St Stephen's School in Duncraig. As well as providing a home, it provided a very nurturing environment. As a Uniting Church school, people might think it would have had some concerns but it never did. It provided a very good home away from home for her.

We are now 34 years later, and PrideFest has developed. This year, the theme for PrideFest is "Be Brave, Be Strong, Be You!", which I think is a lovely theme.

In the short time I have remaining, I want to give a bit of a shout-out. I mentioned earlier that, in my youth, there were physical threats to people, which was devastating. In the modern era, it is something I have not had to tackle because I am very comfortable with it. I do not think my daughters have had to cope with it because they have a very nurturing environment. However, young people today have an environment in which they can be attacked in a more personal way, in a way that their families may not even know about—that is, of course, social media. I want to particularly say to those who use the anonymity of the internet to try to promote their hate: although people do not know you, you know you. If they spread that sort of hate online, they are hurting themselves. In the future, as they grow up, they will see the hate they distributed and know how they hurt people. I ask them to try to use restraint. Just because they are not known, just because they can do it without getting caught, does not mean there are no consequences. There will be consequences. The people they hurt are a consequence, and that is devastating. As I said, kids can sit in their rooms and have that directed at them, and the pain that causes people. To the people giving that pain—do not. They will look back on it, as they get older, as I have looked back on my mistakes—luckily they were only in my head because we did not have social media when I was younger. I look back on those mistakes and think they internally hurt me. In the future, they will look back on their social media posts and they will be very ashamed. It is much better to try to spread love, tolerance and acceptance. That is my appeal, particularly to young people. Old people, I think, probably learn the lessons—slip up, but learn the lessons. Young people, particularly those using social media, I think they may learn those lessons a bit too late. I appeal to them to try to think about what they are doing.

**HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [11.47 am]:** The opposition obviously supports the motion before the house. I have to say that this might be one of my toughest contributions because, thanks to an unruly interjection, I now have this completely false image in my head of Hon Martin Pritchard belly dancing, which I need to get rid of before I make a further contribution. It may end up in an end-of-year speech, Hon Martin Pritchard!

Hon Martin Pritchard generally moves a very sensible motion and I am glad to see he has done so again today. It is probably appropriate that a couple of the dinosaurs in the house kick-off the debate because it was very different when we were young. I hope members will excuse me if I do not try to say the whole LGBT et cetera but potentially say when I was young—because we did not have the extension—it was dangerous for gay people. It was an unruly world. Potential violence was not just potential. In many cases, it was real. I guess it goes beyond that. I was not

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exposed early on, like Hon Martin Pritchard, to a lot of gay people. It was only when I went to university. One of my best friends was a gay person, but I will come to that in a minute. Growing up, it was absolutely the case that people who were obviously gay were under threat. I grew up in regional Queensland, which is probably a bit more redneck than most of the rest of the country. I can say that because I grew up there. It was not necessarily a safe place. I never walked past violence towards a gay person but, if the general conversation in the schoolyard used “gay” as an insult, obviously there was an issue. Back in those days, for us dinosaurs in the room, that is the sort of thing that went on. This negative imaging was really strong and it was absolutely present. I went to university with a good friend Greg Noonan. We did the veterinary course together and I stayed in the same college as him at the University of Queensland. We all thought he was obviously gay but he would not tell us until, I think it was our 10-year reunion. I graduated in the 1980s; that is a long time ago now. In the 80s, it probably still was not safe, but by the 90s and into the 2000s, I think society had changed enough that he felt comfortable and safe. There were women in that class who were gay and also did not feel safe at that time who eventually told everybody further down the track.

Hon Martin Pritchard is absolutely right about people who were involved in the abuse of people. He said he would be ashamed, particularly on social media. I agree. The internet is one per cent good and 99 per cent evil, because anonymity takes away people’s self-control and their moral compass. I think the member is absolutely right. In our day it was much less subtle, but it was in people’s faces. I never walked past a gay person being physically abused, but it occurred. It was out there. It was an unsafe environment. Many times as a child I probably walked past verbal abuse, not necessarily directed at a gay person, but stigmatising that group of people. The member is right, we should not have done it and I feel ashamed that we walked past it back in those days. It is good to see that that has significantly changed. I will not for one instant suggest that it is not out there still. There is a proportion of the community that we will never bring to the position that we both would like to see us all come to. Love will never be uniform and universal, but it is much better than it used to be. I am really pleased that that is the case.

I say it again: it is important for we dinosaurs, Hon Martin Pritchard, to be a part of that process of acceptance, because our generation was probably significant in the rejection of so many people for so many years. The generation before us was probably worse, because we learnt from them. There have been thousands of years of bias and intolerance. I am an optimist. I like to think that we have come a long way. I am not suggesting for an instant that we have come all the way, but we have come a long way in my lifetime from the 80s, as a young person in their 20s, to now, as a relatively young person but much older than that. There has been significant change in the community. It is not enough for that demonstration to be the gay community or the LGBT—sorry, I can never get right to the end of that.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** LGBTQIA+.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** That; sorry. It is not enough for that community to celebrate on its own, without us showing encouragement and an absolute acceptance. I think that is very much there. I think it is the case.

There was a pivotal point in my life growing up when I think I changed. Like I said, I never engaged in the abuse of someone because they were gay and I knew some gay people, but probably not enough. I have enormous respect for those friends I had, but I did not have the same level of interaction as Hon Martin Pritchard did. I probably switched somewhere in the 90s to looking at people and I would say, for example, “That is a gay man”, to “That is a man who happens to be gay”. It is that shift that transforms us. It is a shift to “That’s just another person; they’re exactly like me.” It is too easy to put the label first. The one thing that we can approach for everybody in the community—very few people are experts at this—is make sure that we put the person first and the description second so that a lot of people, people in the chamber, male or female, think, “They’re people first. They’re men and women first; they just happen to have a sexuality that comes afterwards” We can label everybody that way. For me, that was a big step. For me, that was the step that said, “I’m actually humanising the argument.” I did not realise I had done that until many years later. I did not realise that I had taken that shift from label then person to person then label. One day I figured it out, and I thought, “That’s what I’ve done. I’ve humanised everybody as a part of that process.” That unconscious bias probably exists, because that is what we learn as young people. We copy the people around us. We copy our parents and everybody else. It takes a bit to unlearn that and it takes a bit more to work out what we have done in unlearning it.

I take great comfort from my daughters who are 18 to 29 years old. The conversation that they have around people of all sexual persuasions is so different from the one that was in my childhood. Admittedly, we are dinosaurs and a lot of years have gone by in that time. The conversations that we had as young people at a footy club would have my daughters so outraged and so angry. I do not get away with a single slip these days if my girls are around. If I fall back into old habits, I find myself corrected very quickly. My girls are all highly intelligent, very forthright and somewhat argumentative, a trait I attribute to their mother, but there is no backwards step —

**Hon Sue Ellery:** Does she read *Hansard*, because I can send it to her?

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**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** You get away with a lot when your spouse is not all that much interested in politics. However, it is a different generation, and that is really positive. They would be outraged at the sorts of things that went on when I was young and probably when Hon Martin Pritchard was young. They will tell you so and would probably tell anybody so, perhaps at risk of their own physical health because they are not backwards in coming forwards. That has changed and that is great, because the community accepts change; individuals do not. Perhaps it is not universal in all parts of the modern community, perhaps it is not everywhere and there will always be bias against the LGBTQIA+ community as there are against immigrants and people who lived here all their lives, people of colour, and people not of colour. There are biases out there against all of us. I am sure there is a group that hate grumpy middle-aged white men.

**Hon Martin Pritchard:** Dare I say politicians?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Yes; it might be in the house. It is better than it used to be and I am glad of that.

**HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [11.57 am]:** I am delighted to stand and speak on this excellent motion put by Hon Martin Pritchard. I am obviously in the dinosaur bracket, because I recognise the names of all the places he mentioned and, of course, Aherns. I had not thought about the fact that we might have to explain what Aherns was and perhaps even Boans. I am also the parent of daughters who are also quite forthright and opinionated. I have no idea where they would get that from!

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** No question where that came from.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** No. The member has met my husband; he barely says anything, so I might have to take the blame.

As members know, we are currently in the middle of PrideFest. It is a bold and courageous celebration. Even though we have talked about how far we have moved on, there are still people within our community who would find it very difficult to come out. There are still people in our community who would find it difficult to come out due to family circumstances, the community they live in, or their ethnic background. Having PrideFest is still a celebration of boldness and bravery. As we know, it is a fantastic celebration. I have to check the letters as well—LGBTQIA+.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** I have written them down.

**Hon Martin Pritchard:** *Hansard* fixes all.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** *Hansard* fixes all. I have to write them down and when I try to say them without reading them, I often mix them up. That is with most things I read.

The Cook Labor government is committed to fostering inclusivity. I want to go through a few programs and talk about a few things that happened in my neck of the woods in the south west. This year the Cook government delivered \$180 000 across metropolitan and regional areas for PrideFest 2023 for people to come together in celebration of diversity. We have launched a number of programs. In addition to that money, I will speak specifically about 11 community-led groups that received proud and connected community grants in partnership with the Mental Health Commission. One of those was the Busselton Pride Alliance. This is an organisation that I have seen grow over a number of years. I just checked its website to see what it delivered this year because, unfortunately, I do not spend a lot of time back in my electorate these days. It was Pride Wellbeing Week from 28 October to 5 November. The drag queen story time session was held on 3 November. Other events were the theatre and drag make-up workshop; the “You Can’t Ask That: Gender Identity Panel” for discussion so that people from the broader community could ask questions; yoga in the park; and the opening closets training, which was a half-day workshop delivered by Living Proud and funded by Healthway. The reason I want to highlight what is happening in Busselton is that Busselton is an older community. A lot of people retire to Busselton, particularly from areas across the wheatbelt. In lots of ways it is a conservative community so the fact that it embraced Pride Wellbeing Week is amazing. An introduction to diversity and inclusion was hosted by the City of Busselton. An LGBTQIA+ history talk was held at the Old Courthouse, Busselton. An author spoke at the Busselton library and a car park roller disco was held. Looking at the photos, it was not only young people at the disco! There was also an introduction to burlesque dancing. Lots of really fun, active activities were held. There was an inclusive parenting workshop with an accredited mental health social worker. Every weekend in Busselton the foreshore markets are held at Signal Park and there was a specific Pride market stall for both locals and tourists.

The event I want to talk about was the hockey Pride round. This is probably one of the first events the Busselton Pride Alliance started many years ago. I am not sure for how many years the hockey Pride round has run, but I remember it from many years ago. My three daughters played hockey in the Busselton Hockey Association competition for many years. The Pride round was an annual event that was organised by a young man who formerly played in Busselton as a junior and then relocated to Perth and was part of Perth Pythons. For those who are not familiar with Perth Pythons, it is an LGBTQIA+ inclusive social hockey club and its motto is “Play with Pride”. Perth Pythons

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play in a social summer hockey event and have done for many years. Most of the players play hockey for various clubs across Perth as part of the usual winter season but they come together in summer. When one of my daughters first moved to Perth she joined Perth Pythons Hockey Club and found it a very welcoming environment. Every year Perth Pythons go to Busselton to play a social round of hockey. It is a round robin, all-day format at the Busselton hockey stadium. The teams they play are made up of a cohort of regular hockey players across the Busselton association. It is a nice way for young adults and some of the more mature hockey players at the club to play on a team with people they would normally play against. From memory, the Busselton Hockey Association has about eight different clubs that play in its competition. It creates mixed teams for the Pride round. It is great for a predominantly straight, for want of a better word, hockey club to introduce that great round robin event with Perth Pythons. It is a wonderful family event. Reflecting on Hon Martin Pritchard's comments, it is normalised and it is not seen as a big deal. There is a sausage sizzle and parents come along with their kids. It is a celebration of both hockey and also Pride.

I notice on the list of events that there is also now a soccer Pride round when Perth Pride, another team that travels down from Perth, plays the Busselton Pride Allies, a combined team of people from across the Busselton soccer clubs. Sport is a fantastic way to level the playing field, to use a sporting analogy. I am looking at Hon Samantha Rowe who is Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and who I know loves all things sport.

**Hon Samantha Rowe:** Very impressive; I'll be locking that one away.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** She will lock that one away. She loves a sporting analogy.

I want to talk about a program that is incredibly important, given that we have been talking about dinosaurs in this place. Recently the state government awarded an \$80 000 grant for a new program that aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation for older LGBTQIA+ Western Australians by fostering intergenerational connections. We talked about how normalised things are now, but I am sure that there are older members of the Pride community who are estranged from their families because of the time and place they came out to their families back in the day, in the 1980s when I was still at high school. This intergenerational program aims to connect older people at risk of loneliness and social isolation with young LGBTQIA+ volunteers to engage in conversation and connections. By fostering these intergenerational connections, it is hoped that participants will explore shared experiences and foster a new understanding of history. I am getting a bit teary because older people who are lonely is something that is very close to my heart, having recently lost my dad. Those older people would remember Aherns, Boans and Beethoven's nightclub. As I said, I am sure there are people among the Pride community who are estranged from their families because of their life choices. I met a lady recently at an event who grew up in Augusta and has just moved back to Augusta as a woman in her seventies. She told me that the reason she left Augusta 40 years ago was that she could not live with the woman she loved and she has now moved back there as a retiree with her life partner, whom I also met. Augusta is probably a very socially conservative area with lots of older people but it is fantastic that she now has the opportunity to move back to her home town and be close to her siblings and finally feel welcome.

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services)** [12.06 pm]: I rise to make some brief comments about Pride Week, and I am very grateful to my colleagues who are on the list to speak today. It is an important week on the calendar for the LGBTQIA+ community; in fact, lots of activity has happened already. Last week I had the pleasure of speaking at the Crown Perth Pride Luncheon 2023. I am very grateful to Kelly Townson and Scott Alderson from Crown Perth for giving me the opportunity to attend. It was an amazing event. About 800 people from the corporate sector, business and community groups were all in the room celebrating Pride and it indicated to me that society has moved a long way in that time. I thank Crown Perth, Channel Seven, which supported the event, and Matt Tinney who hosted it.

Last weekend Pride Fairday was held and I acknowledge the CEO of Pride WA, Dr Lauren Butterly, and also Michael Felix, the president of Pride WA, and thank them for the work they did. There were thousands of people in Hyde Park on Sunday, and hundreds of stalls from different community groups, businesses and government agencies—all there to show their support for the LGBTQIA+ community in Perth, so I acknowledge Pride WA.

A number of other groups that deserve recognition this week include GRAI—GLBTI Rights in Ageing Inc; Living Proud, which is an amazing group supporting the LGBTQIA+ community; and also TransFolk of WA, which does an amazing job as well shining a light on the issues that affect transgender people—a group that is still marginalised more than most. I acknowledge also Rainbow Futures WA, which continues to play a key role in helping the LGBTQIA+ community.

As one of those members in this place who identifies as being gay, I certainly know that I have come on a journey, as has the community. It is important to remember that while we do get to celebrate this week, some people in the community still do not have the same rights as the rest of us. Although it is a celebration, it is also a time for us to remember that there is more work to be done. Tonight Parliament will hold a Pride in Parliament event. I acknowledge the President, Hon Alanna Clohesy, MLC, and the Speaker of the other place, Hon Michelle Roberts, MLA, for their

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leadership in welcoming the Pride community into Parliament. This is a group that fought—and, indeed, protested—on the steps of Parliament for many years to get law reform and to now have them in the building as part of a celebration in the building shows that we have come a long way. I also acknowledge the President and Speaker, who will be hosting a Pride staff event in Parliament tomorrow, the staff of Parliament who identify as LGBTQIA+ community, and the diversity committee for its work. With that, I again say thank you. I acknowledge the community and the many people in the community who are doing great work, and I say: happy Pride!

**HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral)** [12.09 pm]: I rise to support this great motion that has been put to the house today by Hon Martin Pritchard, and I thank him for moving this motion. It is nice that the LGBTQIA+ community has allies and friends, and the fact that he has moved this motion means a lot to me personally, so I want to thank him very much. I would like to highlight two points in his contribution. He talked about his two daughters, Jess and Dani, and about meeting his daughter's girlfriend for the first time. That took me back to when I took my partner home and my parents met my partner for the first time. At that point, you do not really realise the significance of the event, but, looking back, it was a really important. My parents have been very supportive of me from the moment they knew I was gay, so it was not an issue for them, but I know there are a lot of people in our community for whom taking their partner home for the first time is quite a tough situation. I just want to acknowledge that because it is quite a tough thing.

The honourable member also mentioned in his contribution online bullying and how difficult that is for our young people. My nine-year-old son wants to go online, and I do not want to stop him from going online, but I do see all the comments. I know members in this chamber all have Facebook pages. I get comments on my Facebook page on probably a daily basis telling me to go and hide or to go and shoot myself or whatever. There are some really nasty comments out there.

I was particularly bullied in high school, face to face. I want to acknowledge the contribution of Hon Dr Steve Thomas. It was tough, back in the 80s and 90s, being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community; we have absolutely progressed a long way, but there is still a lot of work to be done. We have talked about listening to the voices of young people, and bullying is still taking place. We should all encourage our friends and our children to not bully others, but there is probably a lot more work that needs to be done to stop all that.

I acknowledge Hon Jackie Jarvis's contribution and in particular the state government's efforts in providing support for the LGBTQIA+ community. Hon Jackie Jarvis also mentioned Busselton Pride. I will return to regional Prides at the end, if there is time. The Pride event in Perth is a very big event—there are hundreds of events involved, and I have the program on my desk if anyone would like to have a look at it—but there is also a number of Pride events taking place right across regional Western Australia.

I acknowledge and thank Hon Stephen Dawson for his contribution. He has had a lot to do with Pride WA and I understand that he is a life member of Pride WA, so he probably knows way more about that organisation than anyone else in this chamber. I also acknowledge Lauren Butterly, Michael Felix and all of the committee and the volunteers who have done a great job so far in putting this event together. There is more to come, including the big Pride Parade, which is happening in a few weeks' time. Certainly I will be marching in that and I know that many of my colleagues in this place will also be marching—not only to be proud but also to show their support, either as an ally or as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Why is Pride so important? We need to reflect on the fact that, for many years, we could not be ourselves in public. For me, Pride is about us reclaiming the space that we were not allowed to have. We were not allowed to hold hands on the street; we were not allowed to kiss our partner; we were not allowed to wear what we wanted to and be on the street. Pride has a very personal significance, because we are reclaiming the spaces we were banned from for many years.

Hon Martin Pritchard's motion refers to young people. Why is Pride particularly important to young people? A survey was carried out in 2019 by La Trobe University and the results were published in a report titled *Writing themselves in 4: National report*. The survey asked 6 418 LGBTQIA+ individuals—quite a large sample—aged between 14 and 21. They were asked a range of questions about their experiences. Their responses revealed that after coming out, 88 per cent felt supported by their friends and 65 per cent felt supported by their teachers. That is a great outcome, but we can still push that higher. Sixty per cent reported feeling unsafe or uncomfortable at school due to their sexuality or gender identity. I think we can do much better in that area. Forty per cent had experienced verbal harassment, 22 per cent said that they had experienced sexual harassment and almost 10 per cent had experienced physical harassment. We talked about physical harassment today; there are still kids at school who are experiencing physical harassment just because they want to be themselves. Just over 80 per cent reported high or very high levels of psychological distress; that is quite a large figure. We can do better.

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We have the Youth Pride Network here in WA. I know my colleague Hon Pierre Yang has met with the Youth Pride Network. It has also conducted a survey, to which one-third of respondents reported that they felt they could be out at school—only one-third, which means that two-thirds of respondents are still living in the closet at school. They felt that LGBTQIA+ issues were rarely discussed in the classroom, and that when they were, they were never discussed positively. I know that there is the rough-and-tumble of the school playground, but we need to do better in terms of how we talk to each other and how we treat each other. LGBTQIA+ students and teachers reported facing discrimination from administrative staff, including refusal to address bullying in school. I have spoken with the Minister for Education, Hon Dr Tony Buti, about bullying, and especially bullying of LGBTQIA+ kids. We need to do better in that space, because everyone needs to be safe and everyone needs to live their life authentically. If they are in an environment where they have to stay in the closet and not be themselves, it is not a great outcome.

I want to talk about the Regional Pride network, which is relatively new. It was established back in 2022 by a lady by the name of Natasja Verschut Cortez. She was formerly a committee member of Pride in Peel. Pride in Peel was planning an event and she wondered whether other Pride groups around WA had had any issues with staging their events. She reached out to a number of the other Pride groups across WA and said, “How about we have an online meeting to talk about our issues?”

This group has grown, and I have an extensive list of members. The chair of the group is Em Davis, who is also president of Kalgoorlie Pride, and the group meets regularly to talk about when they are going to hold Pride events and to exchange ideas, but it also provides support to the different groups. In Perth we have quite a strong LGBTQIA+ community, but out in the regions we are very scattered, so it is great that there is this regional Pride network that brings all the groups together so they can plan their events, share ideas and support each other.

There is a number of regional Pride groups, so please bear with me with this list. They are: Out South West; Out North West; Out Midwest; Albany Pride—I attended an Albany Pride event back in 2022—the First Peoples Rainbow Mob; and Queernarvon, which is quite a new group. It was established in 2022 and held its first event this year. I had the privilege of sponsoring and attending that event. It ran over three days and there were markets and a parade. The parade was amazing; there were about 200 of us marching down the main street of Carnarvon. We were a little apprehensive about the reception we would get from the Carnarvon community, but it was actually really amazing. There were people waving, cheering and yelling out “Happy Pride” from their car windows, so I want to acknowledge the team at Queernarvon. They put together a really fantastic event. There is also Kununurra Pride, whose event I was invited to but unfortunately could not attend this year; PFLAG+ Bunbury; Regional Rainbows Esperance; Pride in Peel; PFLAG Mandurah; Broome Pride, whose event is coming up in March next year; Margaret River Pride; and Busselton Pride. There is also a Pride in Port Hedland, and I am actually wearing the badge today. That event was held earlier this year, in June, and ran for just over a week. It was supported by the shire and by BHP and was really well attended. I challenge members to travel out to the regions to support our regional Pride networks and events. They attract people to the town who stay in the accommodation and spend at the shops. They are a great tourism drawcard.

In conclusion, because time is getting away, I thank Hon Martin Pritchard for moving this Pride motion today, and I acknowledge and thank all members in this chamber who have spoken or are going to speak in support of this motion.

**HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural)** [12.19 pm]: I rise to express my enthusiastic support for Hon Martin Pritchard’s motion today in recognition of PrideFest 2023. I really thank him for moving the motion, and also for his words offering support, compassion and kindness to people across the whole community, recognising the need for the LGBTQIA+ community and particularly our youth to feel more valued and accepted at this particular time.

I note that Hon Martin Pritchard mentioned the slogan this year is, “Be brave, Be strong, Be you!” I feel quite torn about that language; the fact that people have to be brave to be themselves or strong to be who they are. It is a nice encouragement for people, but I feel a bit torn. There is a kind of sadness for me that people have to be brave and strong to confidently let the world know who they are. But I recognise that PrideFest is a celebration, and those of us participating in any way, shape or form are saying to people, “We see you, we value you, and we are here to create safe spaces for you to be who you are.”

In this, as in all things in life, we seem to have a default position of personal experience. If someone is different from us—if they look, act, speak or eat differently—there is an inherent response in many people to feel some sort of fear or to reject that difference. I think that one of the greatest skills we can develop is empathy and compassion for others, and being able to put ourselves in others’ shoes or imagine the lived experience of others. We can never fully appreciate it; everyone is different and our life experiences are different and complex. But when there is an absence of empathy, we see problems like violence and people feeling ashamed to express who they are.

Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Darren West

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I note that Hon Dr Steve Thomas mentioned that, in the past, language and words were used in a way to harm. I can tell members—I am sure it is not just me who is aware of this—that that language and the way people use those words still exists. As a teacher until quite recently, I know that that language is used a lot, and it does not always get called out. I might add that it is not always students using that language. It is built into the culture and the way we speak. I encourage young women like Hon Dr Steve Thomas's daughters to keep calling out that stuff. I am always reminding myself that the standard we walk past is the standard we accept. Every time we hear someone using language like that, it is our job, our role, to remind people that it is quite harmful and offensive and they are perpetuating stereotypes. It might seem fairly innocuous to people, who, looking around a room, think, "Well, I know that person's not going to walk out and punch someone they see as different and some sort of primitive threat", but there is someone who will, and every time we allow that language, we perpetuate that kind of behaviour. I think it is really important to recognise that when people hear that language or the way people talk about groups or speak to groups, they take that opportunity to—not call it out; it is not about confronting them—maybe ask questions: Why would you use that word like that? What do you mean by that? That kind of thing will encourage people to really think about the way they are using language. I am an English teacher, so I think words matter a lot, and I make no apologies for that.

I share an experience that I had—it is not really about me, but I was participating in it—quite soon after I was elected. There was a gathering of a group of people to recognise and take a stance against a group that was visiting the region that held some views that were not very supportive of the LGBTQIA+ community. It was a gathering one evening. It was a peaceful chat. People were having food; people brought their dogs; it was really lovely support for the LGBTQIA+ community.

I spoke to a friend I went to school with who throughout our time at school we had quite obviously recognised as a gay man. I have no recollection of saying anything hurtful to him, but I probably did. I probably did say and do things that, at the time, were not supportive of who he was, or that did not make it safe for him to be open and proud about who he was. I say that I probably did because that was the behaviour around me and no-one was calling it out. This friend arrived a little bit later to this event. I was speaking to him when he got there, and he said to me that he had been so anxious driving there that he nearly did not go, because he was so worried about how many people would be there to show their support—to be allies and to show that they care about and value this group. He said that he cried when he got there, because there were so many of us there, and he was so surprised and thrilled that in his hometown—the small, regional town in which he had grown up—so many people had come out in support of the group. It was a really nice moment and a sledgehammer moment for me of the sheer volume of some of his life experiences up until that moment and how he must have felt. It was a tiny insight into that.

I want to talk about a few positive things. I want to talk about the Pride week "glambassador", Famous Sharron, a lovely ally for the LGBTQIA+ community. She is the "glambassador" this year. I love Famous Sharron; she is amazing. I acknowledge the schools that are doing some work to include and support young people who are LGBTQIA+, particularly transgender children. I know it can be challenging for schools because these are very new developments and significant changes in the way they operate. I really want to acknowledge those schools, the staff, and the parents, as well, who are doing that really good work to support those children and to make their school a safe and inclusive space for everybody.

I recognise the work of two Western Australian authors. One is Craig Silvey who wrote the beautiful book *Honeybee* about a young transgender teenager. The novel opens with that teenager standing on a bridge contemplating suicide. We know that there are alarming rates of suicide and self-harm among our LGBTQIA+ community. The teenager encounters an old Aussie bloke named Vic who is at the same time contemplating his own suicide for very different reasons, and an unlikely friendship forms. This novel is a bit like the slogan. It encounters some criticism because it deals with the idea of someone being transgender with a somewhat light touch at moments. But I was talking to my mum, who had also read this book, and I realised that the real value of a novel like this is that it gently delivers that message to people who may not have been as receptive to it earlier. I think he has done a beautiful piece of work. One line in the book is quite similar to the theme of PrideFest: "Find out who you are and live that life." I thought that is a really nice line from the book. It is really simple, but it is a nice truism about how we should be speaking to and encouraging young people and creating spaces for them to be able to do that.

The other author I want to talk about is a young bloke, Holden Sheppard, who hails from Geraldton, who wrote the novels *Invisible Boys* and *The Brink* about his own and fictionalised experiences of growing up in a regional town as a young gay man questioning his sexuality. He makes those experiences very earnest and authentic, with all the difficulties and challenges faced. They are really great reads to help people develop empathy, compassion and understanding for other people whose experience of the world is not exactly like their own. People can help to inform their understanding and build more compassion through reading amazing novels by our fantastic Western Australian writers.

Hon Martin Pritchard; Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Peter Foster; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Darren West

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I mention very briefly that other parts of the world that I have had the pleasure of visiting have lots of pride recognition all over the place, with flags in windows, pride benches, pride crosswalks and other things to indicate to people that they are welcome, valued and included. That is something that Western Australia could probably look at doing better.

Lastly, before I finish, I would like to recognise my cousin Chantal and her partner, Kelly, who today happen to be celebrating 15 years together and five years of marriage. I wish them both the happiest of anniversaries and happy PrideFest!

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [12.29 pm]: A lot of what I have written down has already been said. I begin by acknowledging Hon Martin Pritchard for this motion. I think that the motion he moved today might have shaken the foundations of this place a little bit because who would have thought that the Legislative Council would debate a motion with unanimous agreement across the house? I do not know that that would have happened in another time. Well done, member. That in itself is an indication of where we have come to as a society and a great indication of where we are.

I acknowledge all members of the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly regional members and the Rural Pride Network. That has been eloquently put before.

The first email I got as an elected member was from a farmer in Gnowangerup who wanted to know how I would vote on gay marriage, as it was called in those times. I thought that it was from either a religious person, a redneck or some other person, but I had to answer it as I felt, so I said, “If I were ever in the position to vote, I would vote for gay marriage.” That farmer from Gnowangerup turned out to be a gentleman called Darren Moir, who is now a very good friend of mine. He is very actively involved in the WA branch of the Labor Party and is a man now married to Nigel. They have a son and are farming together in Gnowangerup. It is a beautiful story. My honesty served me well there, as I was not quite sure whom I was dealing with on the other end.

I grew up in a very conservative regional community, and I have seen the change in that community. I remember the early days of the 78ers in Sydney and how the culture needed to change. It was difficult for people to move the dial at that time, but it has changed for the better. We now have marriage equality, and we now have acceptance, acknowledgement and respect for the contribution that the LGBTQIA+ community brings to everyday life in business, sport, agriculture and, of course, here in politics. I look forward to the march coming up in a couple of weeks, and I will be proudly marching with other members of WA Labor, but there is more to do. This government will get on with the job, as we are a progressive government that wants to bring everyone along for the ride. I offer big support. To members of the LGBTQIA+ community, I say: you are important; you matter; you are loved; and, most importantly, you are you.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.