

MID WEST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Statement

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [6.36 pm]: I rise tonight to acknowledge an event that occurred recently in the midwest. It was organised by the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry and was the Business Excellence Awards. I note that this evening, the member for Geraldton, Lara Dalton, has brought into the President's gallery Joanne Fabling, her friend and also CEO of the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Jo runs that organisation incredibly well. She is a great leader for local businesses in Geraldton. She is also a great exemplar of what can happen when businesses and business leaders collaborate well with government leaders. I congratulate Jo for her collaboration. Also in the gallery tonight is Todd West, president of the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry board. I hope I have got the title right; I apologise if I have not. He is another great collaborator and leader in the Geraldton business community. It is great to see them working together with Lara and in the gallery this evening.

I want to give the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry credit for the Business Excellence Awards. It was an excellent event from all accounts. I was devastated that I was not able to attend the event this year; I did get to go the previous year. I have heard many good things about it. I have also heard about the creative use of the venue. It is great that the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry is showing great leadership in helping to invigorate spaces within the community.

I want to mention a couple of the winners of the event on the night. I have a few favourites among the winners. I would particularly like to mention the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council. It is based in Geraldton but it obviously covers the whole northern agricultural region. That organisation won a Business Excellence Award in the not-for-profit and Aboriginal engagement categories. The Northern Agricultural Catchment Council has a biodiversity team, a coastal team and a sustainable farming program. It also works alongside traditional landowners to encourage the reinvigoration and use of traditional knowledge to improve conservation outcomes and protect cultural heritage. I would like to comment on the Aboriginal engagement award. That is a worthy recognition of the excellent program that it offers and what it does. The program was launched in 2017 in the form of the midwest Aboriginal ranger program. It provides excellent opportunities for Aboriginal people in the midwest region to engage with natural resource management and deliver on-the-ground conservation with a strong cultural emphasis on caring for country, which also allows them to show some of the leadership that it offers with its connection to country. We are aware that we can learn so much from that group as it demonstrates how we can care for country and become more grounded in caring for country as we move about this place.

I would also like to mention Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation, or "Streeties" as it is known colloquially in the midwest. It has established the Gunnado On Country training team. That program is building the capacity of, I believe, 10 Aboriginal youth in conservation and land management studies through a partnership between Streeties and Central Regional TAFE.

The team has undertaken some erosion control and seed collection and established a nursery at Gunnado Farm. There is also a Women on Country training program. The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council won in those two categories of the Business Excellence Awards.

Another category winner that I was really excited about was the Innovation Excellence Award winner, Midwest E-Waste. The formidable and incredibly persistent Mike Barker has overcome all sorts of adversity and resistance from various parts of the community to deliver a service that is incredibly close to his heart. He is passionate about recycling e-waste and a whole range of products. He has a site in Geraldton that will take monitors, printers, modems, old power boards, circuit boards, laptops, game consoles, old electrical equipment—you name it! He will do bread tags and container lids. He probably would not even know who I am, but I went in there a few years ago to have a look—I am a bit nosy and I need to know everything! He was so generous with his time. He took me around and showed me what he was doing with big old washers and how he crushes up glass, which can be put into paving and concrete and whole range of products. It is a fantastic initiative, and I was quite gobsmacked that he had to push so hard to get some uptake with all of those things. To me, it is such a clever solution to a waste problem that continues to grow. I congratulate Mike Barker and the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the judges involved in choosing the award recipients. It was brilliant to see Midwest E-Waste get an award.

I would also like to acknowledge New Leaf Connect, not least of all because it is one of our recent regional economic development grant recipients. Elyce Tunbridge of New Leaf Connect is based in Dongara in the midwest. She had a seed of an idea to deliver a very customised tourism experience that celebrates all the produce and experiences the region has to offer. Her tourism experiences go to places like Three Springs, Carnamah, Northampton and Mingenew and even out to a place called Burnt Barrel in the Chapman Valley area. She offers all kinds of experiences: farm stays, all the great food that we have to offer, and sea lion experiences in Jurien Bay, making the most of what the midwest has to offer. For some of the pirates among us, she also does an experience at the Illegal Tender Rum Co, which happens to be another RED grant winner. We are seeing the fantastic community benefits of the

RED grants that Minister MacTiernan has been delivering. It is fantastic to see someone like Elyce Tunbridge and her New Leaf Connect business being recognised.

Lastly, I want to recognise one of the local legends of Geraldton, Tyson Overston, who won Business Person of the Year at the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry Business Excellence Awards. Tyson is a dynamic, innovative and thoughtful man, and he runs a business called Sweet Orange Productions. As the name suggests, it creates and delivers events and all sorts of things, which probably understates the value that he brings to the community. His brainchild is the Shore Leave Festival, which members might have heard of. It is the ultimate seafood festival. It celebrates all that the midwest has to offer, particularly the Geraldton–Dongara region—the beautiful fresh seafood, the culture and all the other food and adventures.

One of the highlights of that event is the Abrolhos Long Table Lunch. I do not know if anyone has had the opportunity to experience that. People can go via boat or plane and head over to the Abrolhos. They set up a beautiful long table lunch. It is very fancy, for people who like a little bit of indulgence. It has beautiful food. I am speaking purely from vicarious experience as I have not yet been. It is on my bucket list. It looks absolutely amazing, and everyone who has been raves about the experience. I will give a bit of a plug to that event. It is happening from 27 to 30 April next year. I suggest members pop that date in their diaries right now and lock in the opportunity to head to Geraldton and experience the midwest. Maybe jump on one of the New Leaf Connect tours of the region. There is something for everybody, and experiences can be tailored to the kind of holiday or tourism experience that people would like to have in the region. There could be a bit of food, a bit of rum and a visit to a sea lion. Elyce Tunbridge from New Leaf Connect can organise all of that.

I would like to thank the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry for celebrating all the local businesses. There are so many worthy businesses in the midwest and so many people contributing to the vitality, the tourism opportunities and the developing jobs and infrastructure that make the midwest such a thriving and welcoming place to visit.