



**Tasmanian Law Reform Institute**

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**Submission regarding Tasmanian Conversion  
Therapy**

IWD Brisbane Meanjin is a left wing feminist organisation in Brisbane Queensland. We mark International Women's Day each year with a feminist rally and other events that highlight women's struggle to achieve liberation. We also host occasional events through the year to defend women's sex-based rights.

The issues paper does not seem to prioritise the rights and safety of women, lesbians, girls and children. We recommend these focal points be considered as crucial.

Equating conversion therapy applied against lesbians and gay men with the affirmation of the thought processes of those who think they are the opposite sex, ie that they are 'born in the wrong body' is a flawed approach. On the one hand it opposes conversion therapy and, on the other, it affirms conversion therapy. Sexual orientation is one thing, gender identity is another. They ought to not be linked. Sexual orientation refers to women attracted to or having sex with women (lesbians); and men attracted to or having sex with men (gay); and women and men attracted to or having sex with both women and men (bisexual). Lesbians and gays are not trans. Gender identity ideology, on the other hand, is a political ideology that 'converts' people who are likely to be lesbians or gays, into heterosexuals. The affirmation approach takes as its central point the medicalisation of psychological distress and the pathologising of non gender conforming characteristics in children.

Conversion therapy against lesbians and gays has virtually no community support.

Conversion therapy against those who think they are the opposite sex is also likely to have little community support. Yet the Government is wanting to outlaw the former and impose the latter. By linking the two, Government will bypass the usual policy requirement for clarity of intention. To have integrity, you should deal separately with these issues. Otherwise, the appearance is created that you are using a popular issue ie opposition to conversion therapy, to slip in unnoticed and unscrutinised, a pro conversion therapy position for another group of people.

No one is 'born in the wrong body', to suggest they are is not only unscientific, it also does great harm to children and young people. As the emerging stories of the detransitioners attest. Please research these stories and not rush straight into action that will cause untold harm and suffering to an already vulnerable group.

For most children and young people who believe they are the opposite sex, this is something they simply grow out of. A watchful waiting approach is required. For many of the others, skilled therapy is what is required. As well as supporting societal change aimed at challenging and removing sex role stereotypes. Many of these young people grow up to be lesbians and gay men. There is nothing 'wrong' with being gender non conforming.

Feminists have promoted gender non conformity for decades – and this has usually been opposed by the same people who now promote the notion that one can change sexes. A healthy society supports gender non conformity, it doesn't tell children they were 'born in the wrong body'.

A small number of gender dysphoric children and young people experience some relief from transition. It is often short lived (read the stories of the de transitioners, who are usually women in their early to mid 20s). However, for a very tiny number of gender dysphoric children and young people transitioning may be the right response.

This should be used as a last resort when watchful waiting and skilled therapy have not succeeded. It should never be used as a first option as the Government proposes.

Please read and understand the Judgement in the recent UK High Court case *Bell vs Tavistock*. This should inform the development of recommendations to the Tasmanian Government. The Judgement makes clear the experimental nature of puberty blockers – even the manufacturers don't certify that puberty blockers are a safe and effective treatment for gender dysphoria. The false claims made in the issues paper about puberty blockers being reversible and safe do not withstand scrutiny.

### **The Question to Ask**

Recent exponential rises in the numbers of children presenting with gender dysphoria, including in Australia, especially the very high numbers of teenage girls, is of great concern. The question that should be asked by legislators, but rarely is, is this:

Why and under what social conditions are we seeing a huge rise in the numbers of adolescent girls in particular those from backgrounds of sexual violence, family neglect or abuse, and autism, who state that they “hate” their bodies and want to be rid of them? The affirmation model of treatment avoids this question and instead involves fast-tracking children and young people onto puberty blockers which almost inevitably lead to cross-sex hormone treatments and often drastic surgical procedures such as double mastectomies, all of which cause permanent harm.

## **Recommendation**

Remove the linking of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Ensure the rights and safety of women, lesbians, girls and children are addressed and prioritised in all aspects of the legislation.

Introduce a separate piece of legislation that deals with the medical treatment of children in Tasmania

that has the rights and welfare of children as its focus, rather than political ideology.

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On behalf of IWD Brisbane Meanjin