# AGENDER AUSTRALIA PERSPECTIVE

Quarterly Newsletter No 4 July 2005

Front cover photograph: Member of the New Zealand Parliament, Georgina Beyer addressing the Agender New Zealand Conference last June. Georgina is a male-to-female transsexual who is active in all transgender issues. Assuming the Labour Government is re-elected she will continue for a third term.

Special thanks to Kathy Noble who provides the photographs for the *Agender Australia Newsletter.*

Agender Australia Newsletter No. 4
Produced, edited, designed and printed by Marion Child, Murray David Publishing, on Apple Macintosh and Epson printing technology.
© Agender Australia
Paper supplied by Vital Peripheral Supplies, Brookvale, Sydney, NSW.

# AGENDER AUSTRALIA PERSPECTIVE

## Quarterly Newsletter No 4 July 2005

# *A word from Kathy*

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

On 15 June 2005 *Agender Australia* had its third birthday. In that time we have suffered both setbacks and elation.

At present we are in a situation of change and growth, To achieve this we have shed some dead wood, only to pick up new people who are willing to apply their skills and expertise in the furtherance of the TS cause.

I can call on support from Tanya in Newcastle New South Wales, who is a human dynamo and willing to do anything in order to further the *Agender* cause. She has opened dialogue with several groups. Tanya has told us all about her work in the letter which appears on page 5.

Marion, in Sydney, is our publisher and editor of our quarterly newsletter. She is planning surgery towards the end of this year or early next year.

Jenny is our IT person, who along with Kimberley and I, put together the *Agender* submission to R.A.N.Z.C.P. We had further submissions from other groups and individuals. It was very gratifying to receive support from *The Gender Centre*, Sydney; *The Seahorse Society*, Sydney; Simon, a ftm from Toowoomba and of course, from *Agender New Zealand*.

I was invited in August 2004 to join a woman's forum in the capacity of being the representative for trans-women and I also serve on the steering committee. This played no small part in opening doors to make it possible to meet and talk to women's groups, such as Women's Health. At Logan, we now have a facility for trans-women can be consulted for health and receive counselling. At present, we are talking to Women's Health Queensland in order to arrange meetings where they can be given an insight into transsexualism. Added to this have been meetings with the Queensland Office of Women's Affairs, as well as with Anti-Discrimination and Birth, Deaths and Marriages specifically about change of name and birth certificates. We also keep in touch with *Open Doors*, a group for youngsters questioning their sexuality. I have been asked to help youngsters who think they may be transsexual. I have also had meetings with Queer groups at the University of Queensland and Queensland T.A.F.E.



At this point in time I have submissions in the Queensland Attorney-General's Office concerning several aspects of the issue of Birth Certificates, both in Australia and the United Kingdom. The treatment of transsexual people in prison has also been something that has occupied my time. This is an adjunct to the submission to Queensland Corrective Services. With the help of the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission we are trying to talk to Queensland Health. We have had an answer from them to the effect that 'we do not have any training in place concerning transsexualism'. This what we expected from most departments and so our aim is to alter this situation.

I truly believe that *Agender Australia* has a very bright future. We now cover an area from up north in Townsville (throught *Transbridge*), south to Newcastle and to the Blue Mountains and Central Coast districts in New South Wales. I have had enquiries from a number of people wanting to set up new groups in Mackay as well as in New South Wales. These enquiries encompass places such as the Northern Rivers district, Taree, and further south in Nowra. In time we may even extend to Melbourne.

All of this has been difficult and at times frustrating, but in the end, very rewarding. I am at present helping a person transition on the job. *Smith's Snack Foods* have made this easier for me by supplying their own kit which they used when one of their staff successfully transitioned over a period of three years. It is interesting that this same package was requested by both the Queensland Office of Women's Affairs and the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission. *Smith's* approved my passing on the material.

I feel proud of our achievements and hope we can achieve more of the same. My team is first class and are being introduced to all contacts, just in case anything happens to me. We have two or three potential members in the Australian Capital Territory. Perhaps, this will bring us to Canberra!

Our main concern at present is the necessary funding to run the organisation. We only have donations and subscriptions to cover costs. The phone bill is horrendous, but we can't exist without the telephone! The same applies to email services. The expansion also means that the printing costs for the Quarterly Newsletter will become a big issue in the the coming months. The first three issues were provided gratis by Marion who printed the newsletter on her Epson inkjet printer which runs very slowly and can take up to a week (of evenings) to print and bind. Not to mention the design and editorial work involved. With the print run more than doubling it will have to be printed professionally. Marion's company, Murray David Publishing have offered to provide a fifty per cent subsidy for the next few issues but subscription rates may have to be increased. To raise more funds we are selling copies of the submission to R.A.N.Z.P. plus other items of interest we are allowed to use. The

cost is $25 to anyone interested in purchasing on Government Departments and some other groups are currently purchasing copies.

Love and Peace

Kathy

Postscript: Since writing this report I and others have attended the launch of a Queer Group within the University of Queensland. This was followed by a symposium on Intersex. We introduced ourselves to Professor Peter Koopman who is a geneticist. He has offered help and an invitation to meet his team who are studying the genetics of intersexed people. We have accepted with pleasure and will await a time. We have also been requested to present a lecture and question and answer session on 5 October this year and we have agreed to do this. It will run for approximately three hours. In addition, Jenny, Kimberley and I are looking at arranging a series of research meetings, round table discussions and a tour of the laboratory.

# *A word from Marion*

**EDITOR**

Some interesting material has come across my desk lately. The World Science report on new research into genetics and male-to-female transsexuals provides information and an alternative view to older European research. It is heartening to know that work continues into what the scientists see as an aberration in human development because whatever the they ultimately agree upon, *we* know that it is real and that the effects are profound. Certainly we can only hope that it will help to dispell the myths that cause us so much pain and suffering. I'm sure we will also look forward to hearing the result of Diane's action against the US Federal Government described in *Dave or Diane—being different no reason for guilt* which appears in this issue. The *Newsletter* will watch the net for new developments.

Kathy's report shows a great confidence in the future and we should all be grateful to her for her untiring efforts on behalf of all of us. Tanya in Newcastle has brought a whirlwind of activity into our organisation and a welcome breath of fresh air.

*The Seahorse Society* in Sydney have elected Penny as new President. Lynn has stepped down after an excellent six year run. We'd like to congratulate Lynn for the work she has done in that period and also Penny, who I am sure will be a very worthy successor.



I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Newsletter* which has now reached a circulation of 110 copies. The first issue was 20 and the following two were 60. So we are certainly forging ahead.

Happy reading,

Marion

# *A word from Tanya*

**NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT**

Hi Everybody,

I'd like to introduce myself to you all. My name is Tanya Appleby and I live in Windale, New South Wales. I am the Newcastle representive of *Agender Australia*. Our national President, Kathy, wanted me to pass on this information in the *Newsletter* to let you all know about the work I and my group have been doing and the contacts I have made locally.

I have had meetings with *The Salvation Army, Lifeline, Christian Life Church, Centrecare, The Smith Family,* a number of chemists and doctors, Professor Walters, an endocrinologist and the psychiatrist, Dr Larry Brash. The associations mentioned have agreed to introduce me to people who need help and support from an organisation such as ours. I have also had a number of year twelve students come to me for information about transgender matters so they can use it in their assignments. My aim is to support others and in doing so make new friends.

I enjoy talking to people in shopping centres about *Agender Australia* and and do so regularly and am conducting an educational campaign to let people know just what transsexuals are about and what our needs are.

Recently I have managed to get some free advertisements in the local yellow pages phone book. There are also a number of businesses in the area, including radio stations, who are prepared to make small donations if we need to run a raffle or some other activity to raise funds

I am 'spreading the word' about the local branch of *Agender Australia* through the *Acon* groups which will also be helpful to us. In the past six months we have formed a nice social group with regular meeting times and a venue and the dates, times and places are listed below.

I am keeping in touch with *The Gender Centre* in Sydney and have also offered my services to them. Members of the *Centre* who live north of Sydney may be interested in becoming members of *Agender Australia* and will help to swell our numbers.

I am also very glad to have an assistant named Glennise Richardson from Hobartville, New South Wales. For those who want to make contact with her the number is (02) 4578 2782. Glennise is a great help to me and is learning a great deal at the same time.

I am very proud to know our President Kathy Noble and am very greatful to her and to Marion Child, (who edits and produces the *Agender Australia Newsletter),* for giving me this opportunity to lead *Agender Australia* in Newcastle and the Central Coast. They are both the two most wonderful, beautiful, sweetest people on God's earth. Not only are they lovely people, they are God's little Angels. (*Oh, please!* —Ed.)

I have told Kathy, who asked me if I would be prepared to one day become President of *Agender Australia* in the event of her wanting to stand down and have said yes. It would be an honour to follow someone as talented as her providing of course she would be there in the background to help.

Take care and God bless you all.

Love, Tanya.

## Agender Australia—Newcastle Group

Social and Support Group for the Transsexed and Intersexed
Members, Partners and Friends Welcome

Meeting Dates for 2005 at the Uniting Church Hall
48 Regent Street (Corner Regent Street and Portland Place)
New Lambton

Wednesday Evenings:
10 August
14 September
12 October
9 November
14 December

6.30—9.30 pm

Contacts: New South Wales President: Tanya Jane Appleby (02) 4948 1012
Assistant to Tanya: Glennise Richardson (02) 4578 2782



# *The Agender and Changeling Aspects Message*

RESEARCH — You need to do as much research as possible in order to understand who you are and what you must undergo during the journey to full transition. Talk to others who have been there. Listen and learn.

PLANNING — Get sound advice on the how to find a reputable medical professional for an initial diagnosis. Seek a referral to an experienced endocrinologist who will prescribe a suitable hormone regime for you and also to an experienced psychiatrist who can work through this period with you. The latter is mandatory as surgeons will not let you undergo surgery without a letter of recommendation from two Psychiatrists.

FINAL PLAN — Don't rush to surgery. Be sure you are happy with yourself in your new role and fully understand what you are about to undergo so that surgery is done when you are ready. It is not good to deviate from dates you have set and must be avoided. Personal finances can make this difficult so make sure you don't set impossible deadlines which will cause you difficulty in keeping your schedule. Be realistic and plan properly to avoid disappointment which can be psychologically damaging.

NO PRESSURE — You are in charge of your life, no one else. You make your own decisions and stand by those decisions. You will be guided but not forced.

NO AGRESSION — You have domain over your life, no one else. After all the research and planning, you and only you must decide where and when.

CHOICES — Depending on your financial position you can seek an experienced surgeon for reassignment surgery in

Australia or overseas. Again this is *your* choice and *your* decision. No one else's.

DETAILS — At the outset plan when you will undergo a change of name apply for new identity in all forms. Get information concerning rebates from Medicare and private health funds.

SUPPORT — Group meetings monthly. One-on-one as required. All of these are available before, during and after sex reassignment surgery. A time may come when you feel you no longer require support. Once again this is your decision. Follow your instincts. But don't avoid support for any other reason than that you feel totally comfortable in and with yourself in your new role. Keep in touch.

MEETINGS — Monthly as an evening to get together with others. Shopping expeditions and days and nights out for meals or shows.

## *Welcome to New Members*

Each issue we will list the names of those who have joined us in the period between issues of the *Newsletter*.

A hearty welcome is extended to the following new members.

Queensland: Paula

New South Wales: Paula, Dee, Roslyn, Bronwyn, Glennise, Josh, Amanda.



# *Birth Certificates—United Kingdom*

KATHY'S CORRESPONDENCE

From: grpenquiries <mailto:grpenquiries@dca.gsi.gov.uk>
To: 'Kathy Noble' <mailto:fnoble@powerup.com.au>
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2005 7:15 PM
Subject: RE: Australian Immigration Dept.

Dear Ms Noble
After reading your previous emails in regards to your application could you please confirm whether you will be either making a fresh application under the 'Fast - Track' process or whether you will be providing additional information to support your 'Overseas' application.

Could you please inform the GRP immediately.
Steven Sandhu

From: Kathy Noble [mailto:fnoble@powerup.com.au]
Sent: 14 June 2005 21:01
To: grpenquiries
Cc: cmcnab@pfc.org.uk; Stephen Whittle; quartet@pfc.org.uk; angela.clayton@zoom.co.uk; Jennifer Christine Robinson; Elizabeth Riley
Subject: Re: Australian Immigration Dept.

Dear Steve,
I have received your E-mail, thank you. I have been advised that I cannot apply under either the 'Overseas Track or The Fast Track applications' I will therefore be applying under the 'Standard Track' as I have a UK doctor here practising in Australia. He is my GP and is willing to perform an inspection. He is also very aware of transsexuals,as he dealt with them in his practice in UK. Can you please verify what forms are needed, and send them to me ASAP, so that we can complete this application.

Would you also confirm that we can put out simple terminology in relation to the applications.

FAST TRACK For those who have had SRS or have lived in role for a minimum of 6 years or more. FAST TRACK ENDS APRIL 2007

OVERSEAS TRACK Cannot be used, as this really applies only to those born overseas of UK parents while serving in the ARMED FORCES or the LIKE.

STANDARD TRACK Means returning to UK for an inspection by a Doctor, unless one who is practising in Australia and still a member of GENERAL MEDICAL

COUNCIL (GMC) in UK can be found. This means not having to return to UK and saves a very expensive trip. One letter from a doctor, who need not be a specialist. The letter to explain that you have transitioned, now live as a female and includes details of sugary, eg:- vaginoplasty and labiaplasty and when it occurred.

If this is correct, can we put this simplified format out in order to stop all the misunderstandings?

Yours sincerely, Kathy Anne Noble.

From: grpenquiries <mailto:grpenquiries@dca.gsi.gov.uk>
To: 'Kathy Noble' <mailto:fnoble@powerup.com.au>
Sent: Friday, June 17, 2005 7:52 PM
Subject: RE: Australian Immigration Dept.

Dear Ms Noble,
Many thanks for your comments how we could make the information on the GRP website more user friendly.
Your comments will be taken on board and discussed before implementation.
Kind regards,
Catherine Dyer

From: Kathy Noble <mailto:fnoble@powerup.com.au>
To: grpenquiries <mailto:grpenquiries@dca.gsi.gov.uk>
Sent: Sunday, June 19, 2005 12:09 PM
Subject: Re: Australian Immigration Dept.

Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your response to my suggestions. I am at present trying to establish if my psychiatrist is OK to use, as he qualified in the United Kingdom, but whether he is still registered with GMC I am not clear on. I am also talking to our Anti-Discrimination Commission along the same lines as we approached the identical problem in Queensland. The 2003 BDM Act asked for people living abroad to come back to Australia for 2 inspections, as this was seen to be discriminatory, it was amended in February 2004. This now means that the inspections can be carried out in the Country where you are domiciled and are witnessed by a JP or Notary.

This would solve a lot of problems for us here, and would make sure that people are not precluded from receiving their GRC and BC, because they are unable to travel to UK, due to lack of funds. Most of my people are scrabbling to stay above the poverty line for many reasons. Those that are fortunate enough to work just cannot afford to take time off from work and to pay the fares and fees that this would involve. At present, many see this as meaning they will never be recognised by their Country of Birth. As to our 'Legal Status' in Queensland, I can only reiterate what I have written before, that no one here knows where you are coming from, and would again ask for written confirmation where you found these details. When I and others look at the screen for 23/10, it comes up blank. I am assured that there is nothing to say that I or anyone else is without 'Legal Status' in Queensland by the powers that cover this Australian Capital Territory. I and others are 100% covered in Australia according to the Immigration Department, even to the extent of being able to change our Citizenship Certificate to our new name. Mine is being done, and I will receive a new one in the name of KATHY ANNE NOBLE. I would again say, according to Immigration it is our RIGHT to have a new PASSPORT issued, not a Courtesy, as we have been told.

Sorry if it seems that I am going over the same ground, but this has upset many people, so we would like to know where you are getting this information from!

Love and Peace, Kathy Anne Noble

20 June 2005
Dear Graham,
Thank you for your letter of the 17th laying out the requirements to register a death in Queensland. This has come about because we are told we need a new Birth Certificate issued in UK in order to be able to exit this world!

We are also being told that we have no 'LEGAL STATUS' in Queensland due to section 23, sub section 10 of the 2003 Act. When I look at the Act on the web site, there is no sub section 10, only a blank page. However, I note that on the bottom of page 21, there is a notation that states '10 Section 23 (application to note a reassignment of sex)'. Is this what the United Kingdom Gender Recognition Panel are quoting from? Is this being read, that as I have not had my SRS registered in Queensland, and cannot receive a Gender Recognition Certificate from Queensland, as this facility is not available! Would this give rise to them saying that I have 'NO LEGAL STATUS IN QUEENSLAND'? I have been told by Immigration that I am 100% legal, and will receive a new Citizenship Certificate in my Female name.

As you can understand, this has had an adverse effect on not just me, but several others also. Can you please tell me what is the correct outcome, as at present I feel like an ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT!

Yours Faithfully
Kathy Anne Noble

# *Dave or Diane—being different no reason for guilt.*

Chicago *Sun-Times* 5 June 2005
By Mark Brown. *Sun-Times* columnist.

Each time I talk to Diane Schroer it gets a a little bit easier to accept what's happened to my old roommate Dave, a little less worrisome about whether I've slipped up and used the wrong name or called her 'man' as in 'thanks. man' or 'hey, man'. That's not to say it didn't come as a shock at first or that it still doesn't have its awkward mements or that I don't think there's anything unusual about a man becoming a woman.

But she's convinced me it's the right thing for her, and that has helped make me aware that this is one of those areas of human experience about which I had previously chosen to remain willfully ignorant.

That's why I'm hoping you'll stick with me long enough to hear me out on this again today—and occasionally in the future—when the natural inclination might be to look away to avoid seeing something that we might prefer not to know. People in Diane's situation could use a little more understanding from the rest of us. There are more of them out there than we realise, many suffering silently with their tortured thoughts.

How the story began.

If you missed Thursday's column, it was about how Diane, a 25 year Army veteran and Special Forces Commander is sueing the Federal Government for sex discrimination. Up until a few months ago, Diane was known as Dave, which is who she was when she attended Richards High School at Northern Illinois University for the 1976-77 school year.

Last fall the Congressional Research Service offered Dave, 48, a job as a research analyst on terrorism, then rescinded the offer when Dave disclosed he was in the process of making the medical transition to Diane. ACLU lawyers filed suit on Thursday in the District of Columbia on behalf of Diane, who now lives in Virginia.

It had been a couple of years since I'd heard from Dave, but my curiosity didn't go on high alert when I received an e-mail in early April from 'D.J. Schroer', one of Dave's nicknames, requesting my current address. A letter arrived at home a week or two after that. The first few paragraphs were full of foreboding with a warning that he was about to disclose something extremely disturbing.He said the information might be soon become well-known, and he wanted me to hear it from him first.

My God, I wondered. What did he do? Sell secrets to the Chinese?

That led to a strange mixture of relief and stunned amazement as I went on to read that after many years of uncertainty and inner discomfort, he had decided to live his life as a woman and had already begun doing so.

He wrote about the burden of shame and guilt he had been carrying his whole life and about how he was confident he was now on the right path. He also disclosed that he and his wife of 16 years were in the process of divorce. I knew they didn't have kids.

I responded fairly quickly with an e-mail to 'D.J.'. (I couldn't bring myself to use 'Diane' yet) offering reassurances that the news, while stunning, did not upset or offend me and saying pretty much what I wrote on Thursday, which is that I had always known Dave as someone who knew his mind. I promised to be in touch soon. It really didn't bother me. I know who I am.

But it was a couple of weeks before I screwed up my nerve to call and was relieved when I got a recording that allowed me to leave just a message. I think I was afraid because I didn't know quite what to expect.

Early the next week, I answered the phone and found myself talking to somebody with a quiet woman's voice who said her name was Diane. It took a couple of seconds to register.

'Oh! Diane,' I said, and each time I've said it since, it gets a little easier, and when I slip up, she doesn't seem to mind. Diane asked me to tell her story.

Since Thursday, I've heard from several buddies of Dave's going back to high school and college who expressed support because they knew him as a quality person, someone who's not dependent on any feature of his anatomy or how he dressed. I haven't heard from the military, but Diane says her friends there have been very supportive too.

Thoughts tortured him.

We've talked several times in recent weeks, and the most painful part is hearing how Diane, as Dave, grew up with thoughts always clouded by the sense that there was something wrong with him because he should have been a girl. He has had those thoughts every day of his life—on the playground, in college, in combat—until he decided to become one.

Doctors say that transsexuals are born with a disconnect between their bodies and the gender identity of their brains. It is a recognised medical phenomenon. A large number of individuals with this condition end up killing themselves, possibly more than go through with the expensive medical procedures Diane has started.

On the chance that Diane's story can inspire more of them to hang in there and shed guilt, I plan to keep telling it.

# *She Was Never a He*

This was sent to me by Tanya Appleby. I am don't know much about modern music, being a traditional jazz lover and musician all my life (and 'ole fogey') however I think these lyrics are very moving and I'll look for the album myself. You may have a convert Laura.

—Ed.

Laura said:
I've heard this twice on Triple J, and found the lyrics at http://www.alwaysonthe-run.net/antony.htm. To me, this so much like an M2F anthem.

I think there must be a bit of synchronicity involved in this. I bought a Boy George CD for $2.50 yesterdaycalled 'The Unrecoupable One Man Bandit' (discounted in The Warehouse). It wasn't until I got home that I checked the track listings. Track three was:

She Was Never a He
Natasha was a stunning vision
Painted eyes with such precision
Longer legs than any girl I know
Switching down on Old Kent Road
With her lips on overload
Making sure the loneliness don't show
She was never he
For as long as I remember
She was never off her gender categorically
She was never he
Though the boys at school were cruel
You would have to be a fool not to see
That she was never...
Jody she was 'quelle surprise'
Fooled the boys with such a breeze
But inside her heart the terror flows
What if he should realise
Break her heart or black her eyes
These things are so important for a girl to know
She was never he
For as long as I remember
She was never off her gender categorically
She was never he
Oh this world can be so cruel
You would have to be a fool not to see
And the government says you no longer exist
It's a kick in the eye, it's the final twist
Of the Surgeons Knife
Welcome to my glamorous life
Oh the big dark man will he turn a blind eye
Love me for who I am turned me out and made me cry
She was never he
For as long as I remember
She was never off her gender categorically
She was never he
Oh this world can be so cruel
You would have to be a fool not to see
That she was never he

…the cover notes said:

'*She was Never a He* is a tribute to all drag queens, sex-changes and persons of indefinable gender. I know so many fabulous "Titty Men Cock Women" and I wanted to write an anthem for them all. This was also written on the road in 1995 and it's very Bowie/circa Hunky Dory. Natasha & Jodie are friends, and the most convincing slash and tuck friends I know.'

Salutations,
Laura Seabrook

# *Duality & Balance!*

If you feel masculine in the morning and feminine in the night,
Do you have your life under control and is the balance right?
If you're a housewife in the morning and male lover in the night,
Do you wonder is your life under control, is the balance right?

And when you are the one true self, the one that represents your soul,
Are you a complete person then I'd like to know, is the balance whole?
For the three represents creation and also is the number of the trinity,
So maybe you have the balance right, my dear, it's in your personality.

These are perplexing matters that we all require to understand in full,
Otherwise someone out there's going to make you appear to be a fool.
And this is a delicate matter that reaches right to your very core,
We wish to be who we're meant to be, and observe the sacred law.

So irrespective of the sex that you were born and appear to be,
You are in fact all of these three, as you were truly meant to be.
So despair not my dear, it's quite natural to express your femininity,
And if you're born a female you may wish to express your masculinity.

It doesn't really matter one jot as long as we all endeavour to understand,
We're for some special purpose, which is exactly as our creator planned.
And when you truly know what that is, then you'll know what you will do,
To honour that obligation, complete your destiny and to yourself be true.

Does that help to explain the situation or do you need to know a little more?
Perhaps some knowledge of who you're meant to be will help you to explore.
And this can all be revealed in your full given name and your full date of birth,
Contact me at Lifepath Numbers, and you'll understand all you are truly worth!

—Caroline

# *Jenny's Diary*

The diary is continued from the last isse.

2001

3 January. Five days to go . Worry is raising it's head again—is Jim Rodney going to stamp my card, or is he going to tell me he's not convinced…?

Oh blast! I wish it was finished with and I was looking at my developing bits!

8 January. Well that's over with… and I get to start HRT on Wednesday 10 January—oh my!

No matter how you prepare yourself for this shock, it is still there to smack you in the face when it happens.

Except it doesn't—not for hours and hours, then it goes *tweak* when you think about it properly—and a flood of something hits the blood stream and your heart thumps a couple of times and then you're normal again until it happens again in a few minutes and again and again…

I shall have to lie down and take some nitroglycerine for my heart if it goes on any longer…

No—not really. It's just one of those things—you have now been accepted as a woman by two medical practitioners—and maybe one or two people who you know intimately. You know that within a short time you will be starting to change physically—the way you hoped you would in dreams 40 years ago. In ways that will be irreversible and permanent and totally life changing—particularly the SRS bit!

Two years would have seemed a long time when I was 20, but it's right round the corner now and more immediate than you really care to contemplate.

11 January. So now I'm truly on my way—Doc gave me a scrip and told me to come back for a blood test in a month and bade me well—she told me my voice isn't going to need much work and that I have a chance to be really excellent as a woman. She said so many transsexuals come in with extra baggage as well and I seem to be well balanced and stable so it was a pleasure to be able to work with me—my blood was good and my cholesterol was 4.1 which was OK too.

All in all a successful day…and I hope tomorrow is even better. It all seemed so easy, I wonder half the population aren't women—well actually they are

I took the opportunity to make an occasion of it, I went to the chemist in Wickham Terrace and got the prescription filled, then went to the café up the street—and had a long black coffee and took one microgynon 50 and one spiritin—I didn't feel a sense of 'that's it', like biting down on the strychnine, but I did feel that from now on, I am going to be flooded with hormones not my own—and I will be losing the testosterone urges as soon as I like!

I feel really excited but very normal—as if I got knighted or something. Nothing to show for it and there won't be for a long time but there is something different, something that should say here is a new woman—please accept her. Can't even work out how to react to the new stimuli.

13 January. I was told it would be fourteen days before I felt anything—bullshit—my right nipple is a lot more sensitive and achy than normal and

my left is also a little different—though I'm told it is usually the other way round with these things, but I'm not complaining. There's no swelling of the bud yet but there is definitely a change.

I went into where I had my ears pierced—and told the girl who did it that I was transsexual—she thought I was bullshitting, but when I insisted she gave me a huge smile and said 'if that's what you want'. Yup

14 January. Odd sensation in nipples has diminished—must have been just a switch mechanism—I shall have to wait a bit longer I think. My demeanour is fine, I'm quite relaxed (a little too relaxed—I'm watching Lynne do all the housework).

She is being very understanding as I go through the mental exercise of being boy one minute, girl the next—I would like to move on with this but I have to wait for each little footfall to be completed—I shall have to look at doing the name change thing soon.

20 January. Now that's a week since I wrote—a week of feeling something happening which I can't put my finger on and which I can feel as distinctly as a feather across the back of my hand.

My physical changes are not obvious unless you've been living inside this body for 50 years.

1. My nipples are sensitive and achy but not all the time and not together – odd times, there is a definite ping of pain – lasts for about 1/10 of a second, but is quite sharp.
2. There is a certain amount of flesh on my pecs that was not there before – just a layer mind – not a whole side of beef.
3. My testes are about—the size they were last week—and that's really surprising—the semen I let out(!) during the week was a lot clearer than usual.
4. My legs feel softer, so do the backs of my hands.
5. My eyes are brighter (wife told me).

This is about the limit of the changes so far—I have taken measurements of all my features, legs, arms, etc., and will keep a check on their changes.



I was a bit depressed for a day on Thursday, but it lifted after about 4 hours and I've been fine since. This may be as a result of not smoking and the negative impact of a puppy in the house, which is peeing everywhere except when Lynne's about—she's thinking I am frightening the pet, but I am really trying to be my normal sweet self—difficult when it is ripping apart your best strappy sandals and peeing in your court shoes at the same time!

All in all, the week has gone quite smoothly and I haven't really felt overwhelmed by the changes in mood or body—but I feel very calm and 'at peace' about the whole thing, I have no regrets. When I realized my testes were shrinking so fast, I thought 'oh my God', then realized the 'oh my God' was being overridden by a huge grin (a mischievous one at that). So there is no male panic there, and I'm not feeling the loss of masculinity as anything more than what I wanted anyway.

I occasionally feel a bit vague and dreamy—but I think that's just the effect of less sleep than required and hormone battles within!

22 January. Last night, I bit the bullet and told my brother of my gender identity disorder, expecting the worst so that if it wasn't so bad, I would feel positive. I had no need to worry, he told me he loved me and that his wife and daughter (and even her boyfriend) were OK with it—supportive even. He told me he loved me and that I was his best friend—a lovely thing to do in the circumstances—my fears melted away like hoar frost on a spring day—and the world is a little brighter this morning.

I couldn't believe how frightened I was before I sent it—I was trembling and hyperventilating like I was about to jump off a cliff.

My mother and other brother would not be so positive I feel—and I won't be shedding any light in that direction for a while!

28 January. When I remeasured my body on the 25th, my waist was a little less (good) my hips were 1.5 inches bigger (very good) and my chest was about the same—which is fine, as I will be losing muscle as I put on breast tissue. This is only a ten day gap —truly amazing things are taking place.

Yesterday was the first time that someone has read me as a woman—even while wearing male clothes. Lynne also said my eyes are now feminine—not the makeup or anything—the eyes themselves. My soul is female. I have

been seeing Jenny in there for a few weeks—now others also see her. I feel a major bridge has been crossed—without me even realising—what a wonderful feeling! I know I will be accepted as a woman, ugly perhaps, but female nonetheless.

I would like to find a nice hairstyle—but I feel it should wait a while—I'm not quite ready to come out yet—I am not voice ready.

30 January. Last night I was watching *On the Beach* an update of Neville Shute's novel—as it neared the end and the hero and his wife and child prepared to end it all, I burst into uncontrollable sobs of despair—cried like a woman—for the first time. Total loss of emotional control.

Lynne was quite amused when I started, then shocked, then concerned, fortunately the film ended a few minutes later and I could recover—but I was close to tears for the rest of the night and in fact still am the next day. I was warned this would happen and though I have found myself close to tears and even shed a tear or two, I never suspected the avalanche of emotion that occurred. I know what it entails now and if it happens again, I will at least be forewarned and be able to leave the room or something if it is an embarrassing situation.

3 February. My sister in law has written to me with supportive dialogue and some nice hints and tips as well as a lot of concern for my well being. Manchester it appears is not a good place for male-to-temale transsexuals—she had a friend who was one and she was close to being bashed wherever she went—even though she was pretty and not easily recognizable as a transsexual. Thankfully times are a little different and the country is too.

I think it shows a healthy mind not to instantly make out that a transsexual is a sexual deviant—or gay perhaps.

I know that I might get classed as lesbian if I continue to live with Lynne, particularly in the same bed. But I will have to accept some bad things—I guess not all things will be honey and roses, but it's got to be better than testosterone poisoning. So far I have not one regret—and I am very happy.

5 February. Nigel went off to see mum and David on the 3rd to 'out' me.

He did, to everyone. Spent all Sunday fielding questions from Gillian and Fiona. The whole family were supportive and helpful—they were all concerned for Lynne and our relationship. A very healthy family indeed. Boy, am I glad that is over.

I spoke to them all on the phone—on Sunday morning ( Sunday evening local). David was emotional as ever, mum was teary and sympathetic…she said, 'the torment you must have suffered over the years', so it appears she has some knowledge of the problem!

Nigel told me later they watched an operation for the vaginoplasty on the TV some time ago! Well they are better *in the know* than I.

Today I told Michael and Kylie—the owners of the shop from which I work. Kylie first as she was wondering what my personal problems were and if they were resolved. I said they were ongoing—she looked puzzled—and I thought 'well, I can only die once' and let it all out—she was really kind and more than a little phased but was OK, so when Mike came back, I took him out for a short walk and told him of my plans—he was shocked for a minute, but was OK. I watched his face as I told him I was going to have my dick inverted! He paled noticeably! I grinned and gave him a chuck on his chin. Kylie was there and I gave her a kiss of thank you, and we all went back to work.

Big day—big weekend—doctor on Wednesday—I will be able to tell her that all is well.

CONCLUSION NEXT ISSUE

# *World Science*

## Genes Behind Transsexualism Possibly Found
11 May 2005

Special to World Science

Scientists say they may have found genes that help explain why a tiny percentage of men see themselves as women, cruelly trapped in the wrong body.

The researchers say the findings are very preliminary and should be 'interpreted with the utmost caution', due to the small sample size used in their study.

Nonetheless, they say, the results might shed some light on the rare condition,

transsexualism. It is estimated to afflict about one in 30 000 men, some of whom follow through on their sense of their correct gender by getting sex-change operations.

More broadly, the research could help clarify one of the most contentious and poorly understood questions in biology: what creates 'gender identity'—the sense most people have that they are either a man or a woman.

The feeling is normally rather deep-seated; people don't need to examine their body shapes to confirm it. It is also considered distinct from the issue of whom a person is sexually attracted to.

The question is how genes, culture or both conspire to produce gender identity.

Transsexualism 'raises important questions as to how the gender identity is moulded in humans', wrote the researchers, who included Susanne Hennigsson of Göteborg University and Mikael Landén of the the Karolinska Institute in Göteborg and Stockholm, Sweden, respectively.

They describe the research in the August issue of the scientific journal Psychoneuroendocrinology.

If their findings are correct, the risk of becoming a transsexual may depend partly on variations in the length of certain segments of DNA where the genetic code 'stutters', that is, a few 'letters' of the code repeat themselves in the same order many times.

Notably, scientists found in a study published last December that these repeat sequences may be the sites of some of the most common genetic mutations, and thus may underlie some of the fastest evolutionary changes in life's history. Evolutionary theory holds that mutations produce evolution, because the occasional mutations that are advantageous spread through populations, changing these populations' characteristics, and over time gradually create new species.

In that study of last year, researchers found that the muzzle length of dogs depends on the length of certain repeat sequences.

In the transsexualism study, the researchers examined a repeat sequence in each of three genes known to affect the sexual development of the brain, in hopes that one or more of these might shed light on transsexualism. They studied several common variants affecting the length of these repeats in different people.

These variants 'are all much more common than is transsexualism' itself, they wrote. 'Hence, the goal of this study was not to reveal the primary cause of transsexualism', but rather to help explain 'whether the studied genes may facilitate or prevent' it.

One particular variant seemed significantly associated with the frequency of transsexualism, they found. This variant was in a gene responsible for producing a molecule called ER-Beta. ER-Beta acts as a minuscule gateway that controls the



flow of oestrogen, a hormone, through the brain during fetal development.

Oestrogen is thought to be responsible for wiring the brain in a 'masculine' way in healthy males before birth—although, paradoxically, the substance is better known as a female sex hormone. This is because after birth, it influences the development of female sexual characteristics.

The gene that produces the ER-beta receptor contains a section called a CA repeat sequence, so called because C and A are names for two 'letters' of the genetic code which, here, are repeated many times in a row.

The researchers found that longer CA repeats were associated with a greater risk of transsexualism in the the study, which included 29 male-to-female transsexuals (men who wish they were women) and 229 healthy males.

It is unknown exactly how this change in the ER-beta gene might contribute to transsexualism, the researchers said. The gene may produce different variants of the molecular gateway, which transmit oestrogen more or less easily; but it's unknown whether one of these might be the reason for the effect, or whether the reason is something else.

Moreover, the researchers found that the two other genes that they studied also seem to influence the risk of becoming a transsexual. But neither of these genes on its own predicted that risk, they found. Rather, specific combinations of all three variants seemed to be more common among transsexuals.

The other two genes studied were genes encoding the production of molecules called aromatase and androgen receptor. These genes, too, are believed to help determine how 'masculine' the brain becomes.

More masculine, in this context, means that certain brain structures are relatively smaller or larger in males than in females, possibly reflecting the relative importance of those brain structures in each sex.

Researchers have found that parts of the frontal cortex, the seat of many reasoning functions, and the limbic cortex, involved in emotions, are bigger compared to other brain areas in women than in men. Parts of the parietal cortex, which contributes to spatial perception, and the amygdala, which responds to emotionally arousing information, are bigger in men. A part of the hypothalamus, a brain region that regulates reproductive behavior, is also believed to be bigger in males.

At least one brain region has also been found to be different in male heterosexuals and homosexuals, also a part of the hypothalamus. And more recently, gay and straight men have been found to differ in how their brain responds to a scent in male sweat.

But scientists don't know whether homosexuality and transsexualism have anything in common biologically, beyond the fact that some people view both as aberrations—and that now, both are being found to have a possible genetic basis.

The idea that genes underlie transsexualism, at least among men who want to be women, has gained support from reports on twin and non-twin siblings who both have 'this very rare condition, and from reports on families with more than one member' having it, Henningsson and colleagues wrote.

Gender identity is typically established by 18 to 24 months of age, when 'boys come to know they are boys, and girls come to know they are girls,' according to the *Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*, seventeenth edition.

Some people act in ways typically considered more appropriate for the other sex, but this doesn't make them transsexuals, as long as they're comfortable with their physical gender. Rather, transsexuals 'believe that they are victims of a biologic accident', the book says, 'and that they are cruelly imprisoned within a body incompatible with their gender identity'.


## The Gender Centre

75 Morgan Street, P.O. Box 266, Petersham, NSW 2049

- The Gender centre is committed to developing and providing activities which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices.
- The Gender Centre is also committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues.
- We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, families and organisations and service providers.
- We specifically aim to provide a high quality service which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

**The Gender Centre**
The place to go for confidential and free services
for people with gender issues.

Telephone: (02) 9569 2366 Fax: 9569 1176
Email: gendercentre@bigpond.com Website: www.gendercentre.org.au
The Gender Centre is staffed from 10 am—5.30 pm Monday to Friday.


Agender Perspective Newsletter welcomes stories and articles on all aspects of transgender issues, particularly those which discuss personal experiences.

Please send your articles in whatever version of MS Word you have, to Marion Child at:

**childpub@bigpond.net.au**

You can also simply type them as a regular email and forward to the above address.

Please do not send articles as typed or printed hard copy through the mail. Only electronic material can be accepted.

If photographs are included please send them as separate JPEG files, or if you have the software, as eps or tiff files.

Significant Others
A support group for families and friends of transgendered people has been formed in Brisbane within Agender Australia. Anyone seeking help or support is urged to contact this group by email.

Contact Debbie Mulhearn on:

mullymum@yahoo.com


Agender Australia has a policy of allowing any organisation concerned with gender issues to reprint articles included in this newsletters. A credit would be appreciated.

Scenes from the Agender New Zealand Conference in June. (Photos: Kathy Noble).