

# DES EXPOSURE AUSTRALIA

PERSONAL AND CONSUMER ASPECTS OF DES EXPOSURE IN AUSTRALIA

TUESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2011

## Gender Issues & DES



DES Action Australia-NSW has received 3 enquiries from DES sons with gender variance issues and with very heart-rending stories. With the organisation's limited media exposure and with having fielded 1500 enquiries, this does appear significant. It should be acknowledged that it also takes tremendous courage for these enquirers to phone our organisation (outside their direct care) about their situations.

We know from animal studies that DES and other oestrogens affect the development of sex-dimorphic brain structures and behaviour. Exposed to hormones in the womb at critical stages, animals exhibit behaviours of the opposite sex after birth. Researchers are starting to notice higher-than-expected rates of transgenderism in DES sons and daughters.

Scott Kerlin, of DES Sons International, has compiled *Prenatal Exposure to Diethylstilbestrol (DES) in Males and Gender-Related Disorders: Results from a 5-Year Study* (2005). This study shows high prevalence of individuals with confirmed or strongly suspected prenatal DES exposure who self-identify as male-to-female transsexual or transgender, and individuals who have reported experiencing difficulties with gender dysphoria. Australia was included as a nation of origin in this sample study. An earlier version of this paper is found at [www.antijen.org/transadvocate/id33.html](http://www.antijen.org/transadvocate/id33.html)

There has been no scientific literature published on this specific topic. The lack of

interest/will so far is surprising in view of increased concerns about chemicals that bind to oestrogen receptors in humans and animals.

Details for DES Sons International:<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/des-sons/>

Reference for this blog item: *The Riddle of Gender: Science, Activism, and Transgender Rights* (p 16,17) 2005, Deborah Rudacille ISBN 0-375-42162-9.

As part of DES Awareness Week June1-7 in 2011, DES Action Australia-NSW sent DES information to transgender and LGBT groups and publications in Australia. As a result, it was learned that DES was also given to people undergoing sexual transition male to female. Questions have now been raised regarding possible long-term risks of this DES usage.

**July 2011 Update:** The Chameleon Society of Western Australia are now undertaking an Australia-wide project to survey the extent of DES exposure/usage among those affected by gender issues in Australia. Society details are at:

<http://www.chameleonswa.com/>

POSTED BY CAROL DEVINE AT TUESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2011 

## A lifetime search for the stranger on the shore

*October 30, 2011*

### **Video courtesy of Manly Surf Ltd**

**Westerly Windina.**

Manly Surf, at 4.30pm on Channel Nine today, features Westerly Windina. Watch extracts from the production courtesy Manly Surf Ltd

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**A former champion surfer has finally found a modicum of peace - but it has been an emotionally and physically torturous journey, writes Frank Robson.**

For Westerly Windina, home is a small Housing Commission flat at the Gold Coast. Technically, she lives alone but in every other sense Windina shares her home, and her mind, with the man she used to be: surfing great Peter Drouyn.

For the first-time visitor, this takes some getting used to. Especially when the coquettish transsexual, who styled her female self on Marilyn Monroe, talks of Drouyn in the third person.

"Peter's gone now," she says, matter-of-factly. "He was always a compromise on the real thing: the girl [inside him]. He was a stranger on the shore and he always knew there was something wrong. But although he's gone, I still have his memories ... they're the only memories I have."

Advertisement: Story continues below



Peter Drouyn, aged 15, on the lawn of his parents' Surfers Paradise home soon after winning the national junior title in 1965.

Given Drouyn, the seemingly fearless surfer, was shaped like a "square gorilla", Westerly Windina is disconcertingly slim and graceful. She wears a short, figure-hugging dress, her make-up is flawless and her voice and mannerisms are - as the Monroe model implies - unmistakably female.

"Do you mind if we do the photographs at the beach first?" she asks breathily when we arrive. "Otherwise my hair and make-up are going to be all messed up."

When she emerged publicly a few years ago, Drouyn's inner woman impishly named herself for the westerly (or offshore) winds so prized by local surfers.



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## Westerly Windia

Former champion surfer Peter Drouyn now known as Westerly Windia. *Photo: Paul Harris*

Image gallery <http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/national/westerly-windia-20111029-1mplv.html?selectedImage=14>

When Drouyn was at his peak and the westerlies blew, crowds of admirers gathered at Kirra Point to watch him, often alone, take on the towering winter storm swells that broke far out to sea - a spectacle described by 1978 world champion Wayne "Rabbit" Bartholomew as "the best display of surfing I've ever seen".

En route to the photo session, I ask Windina about those daunting waves and how, in the days before power-ski tow-ins, Drouyn managed to even reach the takeoff zone. "Oh, Peter knew all the local currents and used them to his advantage," she says from the back seat. "Even later, he never used tow-ins ... he felt if you couldn't catch the wave unaided, you weren't really surfing."

Windina surfs occasionally at a secluded spot but says her style is quite different to Drouyn's. (In an unusual public appearance, Windina is seen surfing at Manly in the new series of *Manly Surf* at 4.30pm today on the Nine Network.)



Ladies' man ... Drouyn was a hit with the girls, though he was distant.

Today she spends 30 minutes posing saucily beside the placid Broadwater for photographer Paul Harris. "This is my best side," she tells him, pouting and fluttering her lashes. "Would you like some shots of me in my bikini? ... A little more this way? ... That should look fantastic ... Oh, it's such a pleasure to work with a good photographer."

Back in her cluttered flat, Windina seems keen to delay the inevitable analysis of Drouyn's troubled life. She tidies her hair, makes coffee, then settles at a home organ and plays a stirring piece of music she wrote as the score for a proposed movie, before noting that Drouyn, despite a lifelong desire to "sing and dance and act", never enjoyed being photographed the way she does.

"With Peter, there was always a shyness and confusion - almost a feeling of insanity - when he had to do things in front of a camera. He started having terrible panic attacks at the age of 12," she turns and indicates an image of Marilyn Monroe on an etched wall mirror, "like that girl there. She had panic attacks. Peter bought that picture in 1979 and carried it with him ever since. Why would he do that? I think it was because he recognised someone who was a part of him, or part of me, for a long, long time."

As Windina tells it, Drouyn saw himself as a failure, reviled and taunted by macho surfers and the surf media because they "sensed something alien" in him and wouldn't let it rest.

Yet, even after he quit competitive surfing, Drouyn's achievements were remarkable. He studied acting at the National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney and appeared in films, plays and TV commercials. He devised a "man on man" judging format that changed the face of competitive surfing and he opened surfboard shops and a modelling school on the Gold Coast. He learnt to speak Mandarin, then introduced surfing to mainland China; he studied civil

engineering; and - in 2005 - qualified as a solicitor while in the throes of becoming Westerly Windina.

Peter Drouyn was born in 1949 to middle-class Catholic parents who owned a clothing store in Surfers Paradise called, oddly enough, His and Hers. As a young boy, he adored his singer-pianist mother, Gwendolyn, who sometimes allowed him to put on her shoes and lipstick, saying only: "Don't let your father see."

From the time he got his first surfboard at 11, it was obvious Drouyn had a freakish talent for the sport. Yet even then he felt confused and scared by a growing sense that he was "supposed to be female". Woken most nights by panic attacks, he would curl up on the family couch and hug his dog.

"I still sleep on the couch every night," Windina says. "As a teenager, I dated girls because I felt I had to, because I had this thing [penis]. But I was never homosexual, god, no. And I wasn't a boy who wanted to turn into a girl. I was a girl with a dick. I felt like someone with two heads; I felt like crying out, 'Can I just have one, please?'"

At 15, Drouyn won the Queensland junior title; later that year, 1965, he went to Sydney to take on Australia's best in the nationals.

The night before the contest he was monstered in a Manly pub by three locals who told him he had no hope and should go back to Queensland. Later, when Drouyn crossed the street to check the surf, the same three surfers grabbed him and beat him so badly a friend had to rush him to hospital for stitches to gashes in his face.

The doctor told him to rest and stay out of the water but next morning he paddled out and won every one of his heats and the junior title. No one knew, Windina says, that Drouyn was following a secret plan. At 13, he had concluded that only surfing could "save" him from his gender torments and set himself a series of goals (ending with the world title) that he "had to achieve" to stop himself feeling scared.

"I was scared of life," Windina says, losing track of her pronouns, "yet here I was in 20-foot [six-metre] waves: the contradiction of all times."

And was Drouyn scared in such waves? A pause. "Oh yeah," Windina nods gravely, "he was scared.

"But he had to do it, you see. He told himself he was ready to die. And I do admire that part of him, I really do. Because he was so alone."

Drouyn went on to win all but one of the titles he'd set himself. By 1970 - when he took out the prestigious Makaha International in Hawaii - he was acclaimed as one of the world's best. And suddenly, the beautiful girls who followed the surfing circuit were vying for his attention.

"They were crawling all over him," Windina hoots. "Peter loved it at first but after a night, or a couple of weeks, he'd make strange excuses to get rid of them. The girls absolutely adored Peter because he knew how to make love to them. He knew exactly what they wanted but, in the end, god, he just broke so many hearts."

Windina's eyes fill with tears. "He didn't mean to," she says, in a tiny voice. "And sometimes, after [rejecting them], he'd chase after them, scared he'd lose them ...

I even got engaged to one girl on the spur of the moment. It lasted just one night and next morning she found me in the garden, crying.

I said, 'I can't do it and I can't even tell you why.' And she was devastated."

(By this stage, Windina has all but stopped referring to Drouyn in the third person, which I don't notice until transcribing the recording, perhaps because I'm getting used to the idea that I really am talking to an exotic woman named Westerly Windina, who used to be a bloke.)

The world surfing title Drouyn told himself he'd win to "fulfil the matrix" of his plan was held at Bells Beach in Victoria in 1970. But he broke his preferred board and only managed third.

"That was the terrible tragedy," Windina sighs. "I was 21. I felt like I'd lived seven lives already, yet I still didn't know who I was.

"So I said, 'Right, that's it. I'm going to do acting now.'"

Drouyn would return to surfing later but only briefly. The "tragedy" of his loss at Bells Beach marked a new phase in his long downward spiral. After a stint at NIDA, he spent six months travelling the world with filmmaker Bob Evans but the movie they made, *Drouyn*, sank like a stone and its star sank even deeper into depression. In 1974, he spent a harrowing fortnight in a Sydney psychiatric hospital before escaping through a window - "Like in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*" - and returning to the Gold Coast.

Over ensuing years he made a short surfing comeback and threw himself into other pursuits, giving rise to the contemporary view of him as a "visionary" bursting with ideas and creativity. But, like his contrived 1989 marriage to a woman in South Africa (which produced the son he wanted but ended after a year), none of Drouyn's new directions stood the test of time. Except, Windina insists, for his emergence as a woman, about 2002 or 2003.

As Windina describes it, Drouyn's metamorphosis followed a bad wipeout at Burleigh Heads - "So unlike Peter!" - in which he burst an eardrum and almost drowned.

"They say it takes a hard knock, or a near-death experience, to change your life," she says. "And the upshot is that I think Peter might have 'died' that day at Burleigh."

Not long afterwards, she says, Drouyn would drive to the beach late at night, strip to his underwear and dance rapturously. "Something just snapped," Windina says. "I felt

I was in a different world. I was dancing ballet and doing all this girl stuff. I started buying things at Lifeline - a pair of female underwear or a little dress. I thought I was going crazy all over again ... and then I started to realise that the girl in me had finally just popped out."

After that, Drouyn's lifelong sense of conflict and desperation lifted.

"But this wasn't your regular transsexual crossover," she says, "because that [usually occurs] intentionally, often with erotic overtones. With me, it was like a volcanic eruption, like a supernova. And somehow, it freed me."

Aided by female hormones, her physical transformation followed but until now Windina has always dodged the question of whether she has had a gender-change operation.

"Sometimes I've fibbed and said I have, because I wanted people to see me as a real woman, not a freak or a fake. But I haven't and I don't want to fib about it any more.

"As Westerly, I sometimes do feel attracted to men. But that's where it stops. Because I couldn't do that to a man: you know, he suddenly sees this ... thing. It would be terrible. So I can't have a relationship until I've had the operation."

Then why not have it?

"Because Peter left me with nothing," she says, like an abandoned spouse. "He left me in poverty ... and although I qualified as a solicitor, no one would give me a job and I get by on a pension.

I would dearly love a benefactor or a philanthropist - or just someone who understands torment - to step forward and help me out with the cost of the operation. If that could only happen, I know the door will open at last and this little bird will fly out and be able to do all the things she was born to do."