

Transsexual Conor Montgomery launches human rights challenge **FEMALE-to-male transsexual Conor Montgomery says he is perfectly okay with his gender identity, but federal and state laws are making him pay a heavy price.** Mr Montgomery, 50, holds an Australian passport stipulating his gender as male, but on his birth certificate he is female because the NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages refuses to alter it. Today, he delivered a petition to the Australian Human Rights Commission in Sydney alleging he had been discriminated against by the NSW and federal attorneys general. As the laws stand, he says, the only way out of an embarrassing and contradictory situation is for him to undergo painful, possibly life-threatening surgery. Mr Montgomery made the "transition" to male in the past two years, taking hormones and undergoing a double mastectomy and chest reconstruction. However, he still has female genitalia owing to medical complications that mean surgery would pose a threat to his life. "Last year a solicitor attempted to have (Mr Montgomery's) birth certificate changed to male because he now lives as male, has undergone surgery and hormone therapy," Sexologist and Sex and Gender Education Australia spokeswoman Tracie O'Keefe told reporters. "But the Births Deaths and Marriages Department, which is under the Attorney General's Department of NSW, refused to change his birth certificate. "We're also filing a complaint about the Federal Attorney-General because at the moment Conor is unable to marry one single person in Australia because he has a male passport and a female birth certificate, which means any marriage whatsoever can be dissolved." Mr Montgomery says the Government has deemed him to be an "intersex person", causing him embarrassment, depression and awkwardness. "It's unbelievable that in this time in history that people are deemed to need to undergo unnecessary, painful surgery in order to satisfy a government," Mr Montgomery said outside the commission. "It's really draconian that to change my documents they want me to put my life at risk to make them feel better about my gender. "I'm okay, my gender's okay, I'm okay. They're the ones with the problem and they need to change the laws." He said there were many other Australians in similar cases who would benefit from a change in legislation. In fact, Ms O'Keefe said that about one in 100 Australians are sex or gender diverse. "Many people have got documents that don't comply to their sex or gender identity, which as you can imagine is very, very embarrassing when you have to go and present documents and then people refuse you service because your documents aren't co-ordinated," she said. Ms O'Keefe would like to see change in Australian legislation, including the introduction of laws similar to those in the UK which she said allow for the changing of documents without genital surgery.