

Trans action

Trans people are still fighting for rights that gays and lesbians now take for granted, says Sally Goldner.



Approximately 18 months ago, TransGender Victoria received a telephone call from a trans woman living in central Gippsland. For whatever reason, rumours had spread that a paedophile was living in her town. Local reaction was swift. "Paedophiles are weird, trannies are weird, the tranny must be the paedophile," was the erroneous line of reasoning which led to people driving past her house at all hours screaming insults and throwing rocks through her windows.

TransGender Victoria became worried when the woman failed to return our calls. She finally did, hav-

ing just been discharged from the hospital where she'd spent the last three days after the stress and fear she was living with led to a suicide attempt.

Events such as these remind us that trans people have a long way to go before they achieve equity, or win full and consistent legal protection at State and Federal levels.

Current anti-discrimination legislation across all states and territories is flawed where gender issues are concerned, as Aram Hosie, spokesperson for the West Australia Gender Project explains.

"The [WA] Gender Reassignment Act (2000) is far from perfect, relying on a person to have had some sort of surgical intervention to be eligible for a certificate, and requiring those that are previously married to get a divorce before their 'new' gender can be recognised," Hosie says.

"However, there is no protection from discrimination for people who don't have a gender reassignment certificate. Therefore there is no protection for people who are transitioning on the job, for people whose gender expression is incongruent with their legal gender or for people who are intersex or of indeterminate gender."

Trans Western Australians also, "desperately need... the establishment of a Gender Centre or clinic, or at the very least, well established and promoted treatment networks with clear referral pathways."

TransGender Victoria believes that all states need services similar to those provided by Sydney's Gender

Centre, which is "committed to developing and providing services and activities which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices", and Tasmania's 'Working It Out' program.

Victoria's Equal Opportunity Act currently protects the full spectrum of people experiencing gender identity issues. This includes transsexuals regardless of surgical status, and cross-dressers. Changing a birth certificate, however, requires 'sex affirmation surgery' and is only available to those over 18.

At the Federal level, there is no equal opportunity law covering gender identity, meaning, for example, that there is no protection for trans people working in the Federal public service, one of Australia's single largest employers.

The lack of such legislation also exacerbates the situation where trans people applying for passports are considered 'undesirable'.

So how to change this situation? Personally, I take the view that if I was realistic regarding my gender, I'd still be trying to live male and be very depressed or very dead. 'Realism' got me nowhere. So it's time to take the same approach as a community and not settle for political realism. Rather, it is time to fight for the justice and equity we *all* desire and deserve.

TransGender Victoria: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~victrans> www.gendercentre.org.au