



Guidelines for Journalists

FTM Australia Information Sheet

Accurate and respectful journalism fosters positive community attitudes and breaks down stereotypes. Stereotypes have only a passing acquaintance with the truth and work against quality journalism.

Best practice is always verify with the individual the correct term to refer to them, before using such terms in copy, rather than assume or impose terminology on them. Media reports which use correct pronouns and terminology, also increases the reader's understanding of these issues and shows consideration for the personal experiences of transgender people as well as men and women with transsexualism.

There are specific issues (legal and social) relevant to transgender people which do not apply to men and women (of transsexual background/experience). There are also social and medical issues specific to women (transgender or transsexual) which are irrelevant for men (transgender or transsexual) and vice versa.

I – Terminology

affirmed male – a legally affirmed male with a variation in his physical sexual formation (usually identified *female* at birth).

affirmed female – a legally affirmed female with a variation in her physical sexual formation (usually identified *male* at birth).

Examples—

A person who has affirmed their female sex is referred to as a *woman*, an *affirmed female* or a *female of transsexual background* rather than a "male-to-female transsexual" or an "MTF".

Similarly, a person who has affirmed their male sex is referred to as a *man*, an *affirmed male* or a *male with transsexual background* rather than a "female-to-male transsexual" or an "FTM".

transsexualism – a recognised medical condition affecting men and women.

Examples—

"men and women living with transsexualism" or "men and women with a transsexual past" - is appropriate for those men and women who experience a variation in their physical sexual formation.

The term "transsexual" on its own is usually considered to be demeaning and objectifying of the man or woman it is applied to. The person comes before the condition.

sex change – a demeaning and depersonalising term previously used to refer to transgender people or men and women with a background of transsexualism.

Men (and women) with a particular medical condition tend not to appreciate being described as the *medical condition*.

Examples—

✗ "the cancer woman said..."

✓ "the woman with cancer said..."

✗ "the transsexual said..."

✓ "the woman with transsexualism said..."

✓ "the man with transsexualism said..."

✗ "trannies say..."

✓ "transgender people say..."

✓ "men and women with transsexual background say..."

✗ "sex change..."

✓ "sex affirmation treatment..."

transgender - usually appropriate for people who express gender contrary to their legally assigned sex.

FTM/MTF – abbreviations for female-to-male and male-to-female individuals respectively. Not used by all in common.

Examples—

A transgender female-to-male (**FTM**) person uses hormones and/or surgery to enhance their transgender identity and is usually referred to as a *transman*, a *transgender man* or another personal identity label.

Similarly, a transgender male-to-female (**MTF**) person uses of hormones and/or surgery to enhance their transgender identity and is usually referred to as a *transwoman*, a *transgender woman* or other personal identity label.

transman/ transwoman - blended nouns used by some people, offensive to others.

FTM Australia
PO Box 488
Glebe
NSW 2037
Australia
mail@ftmaustralia.org
www.ftmaustralia.org.au

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II — Use of Pronouns

A person should be referred to at all times with pronouns appropriate to their identity. If in doubt, it is perfectly acceptable to ask the individual.

Using the pronouns and possessive adjectives of the person's birth-sex can be extremely offensive and inaccurate.

Examples—

✗ When Steve was a girl, she played footy on the boys team.

✓ When Steve was a girl, he played footy on the boys team.

She, Her — appropriate and desirable for women and girls (usually identified *male* at birth).

He, Him and His — appropriate and desirable for men and boys (usually identified *female* at birth).

III — Sex Affirmation Procedures

Surgical treatment to harmonise a man or woman's physical body with their core gender identity is called *sex affirmation treatment (SAT)* or *sex affirmation surgery (SAS)*. This is medical treatment under the care of medical professionals involved in the rehabilitative process of harmonising a person's sexually differentiated body with the person's neurological sex.

The nature and extent of *sex affirmation surgery* differs between affirmed females and affirmed males. *Sex affirmation treatment* is rehabilitative in goal and purpose and not in imitation of a cultural conception of the function or appearance of a perfect male or female body.

Sex affirmation surgery does not require results that are either cosmetically or functionally 'perfect' or complete in order to be considered successful. The goal or purpose of SAS is the attainment of sexual unity and comfort for the man or woman concerned.

Unless your article is about surgical developments or specifically about an individual's genitals, any reference to a man or woman's affirmation surgery procedures or what their genitals may appear like, is highly offensive.

Generally speaking, if someone has had *sex affirmation surgery*, this information should be considered confidential and should never be used in a story without their explicit prior consent.

✗ He had a sex-change in 1995.

✓ He had sex-affirmation surgery in 1995.

Many of the media reporting guidelines used in regards to issues of ethnicity and/or race can be applied here.

Examples—

The following terminology has been deplored when used in matters of ethnicity.

✗ Blacks claim they have suffered discrimination.

✓ Black people claim they have suffered discrimination.

The similar usage of the word '*transsexuals*' or '*transgenders*' referring to transgender people or transsexual men and woman is equally inappropriate and offensive.

✗ Transgenders claim they have suffered discrimination.

✓ Transgender people claim they have suffered discrimination.

✗ Transsexuals claim discrimination occurred when...

✓ Men and women with transsexualism claim discrimination occurred when...

IV — Use of Quotation Marks

Never put the following in quotation marks—

- sexual orientation
- possessives
- pronouns
- genitalia
- gender markers, eg., man, woman
- or sex labels, eg., male, female.

Examples—

✗ Before Sandra's sex-change, 'she' played professional golf.

✓ Before Sandra's sex-affirmation, she played Men's Professional Golf.

✓ Before Sandra's transition, she played Men's Professional Golf.

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- ✘ Before Mark's legal-sex change, 'he' played professional golf.
- ✓ Before Mark's sex-affirmation, he played Women's Professional Golf.
- ✓ Before Mark's transition, he played Women's Professional Golf.

Best practice when writing personal stories or media items about transgender people or men and women of transsexual background, always ask the individual how they wish to be identified. People usually prefer to be identified by their name. When in doubt, it's always safest (and most respectful) to ask.

To do otherwise shows intentional disrespect to media subjects, and could be injurious. The man or woman you are addressing or describing may not be transgender or alternately may even not have a transsexual background.

V — Further Reading

- **Terms and Definitions**

<http://www.ftmaustralia.org/publications/glossary.html>

- **Difference on Trial**

<http://www.ftmaustralia.org/library/04/wallbanks.html>

Difference on Trial: Transsexualism in Family Law and Property Relationships Litigation at the 11th National Family Law Conference; Beyond the Horizon; 26th-30th September 2004

Rachael Wallbank BA LLB ACCSPEC (FAMILY LAW) LSNSW, NSW Australia

- **Contact details for Journalists**

<http://www.ftmaustralia.org/press/contacts.html>

- **Frequently Asked Questions**

<http://www.ftmaustralia.org/faqs.html>

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