



# Transsexualism 101

## MTRA FACTSHEET

*"Transsexualism is the unshakeable feeling you belong to the other sex.*

*You have a body, intellectually you recognise that, but you don't feel it's yours. You feel it's a mistake; your feeling is to belong to the other sex, and in that way you cannot be corrected.*

*No-one can convince you it should be otherwise. There's no way out for transsexuals then to adapt the body to the mind."*

— Prof. Louis Gooren, 2000

### A man with the physical condition of transsexualism—

- has usually been assigned the sex of "female" at birth
- seeks to correct the mistake made at his birth
- has a very strong personal persistent discomfort of 'being in' the 'wrong body'
- has a core *male* gender
- never 'changes gender'
- strongly feels his body did not develop the way "it was supposed to"
- requires medical treatment to correct his physical appearance and resolve his physical discomfort
- seeks correction of his *legal-sex* to male in recognition of his *true-sex* (core gender identity)
- is fundamentally and irrevocably *male*
- is not represented by terms such as an 'FTM', 'transman' or 'transgender'.

### Affirmation Treatment —

The only successful treatment that has ever been found for men affected by transsexualism is to affirm the sex they know themselves to be.

*Sex affirmation treatment* (also called sex reassignment) is not an overnight fix for transsexualism.

Treatment is a long, expensive process, and often includes hormones and some surgery. The final result is something of a compromise for many men, as lower surgeries are relatively non-functional at this point in time. However, nearly all men find that, *sex affirmation treatment* offers them a vastly improved and fulfilling life.

Men who are affected by the physical condition transsexualism have a physical appearance that is the opposite to their core gender. Medical treatment can amend a man's physical appearance to achieve harmony with his core brain-sex (male). Once his physical appearance matches his core gender, his intense discomfort with his physical appearance is largely reduced or disappears after treatment.

*"Transsexuals, who I believe are intersexed, have the body and genitals of one sex and the brain of the other making reconciliation of their sexual and gender identities problematic. They solve their problems of reconciling, their disparate sexual identity and gender identity, by saying, in essence, "Don't change my mind; change my body.""*

— Prof. Milton Diamond, 2000

Opinions vary on the incidence of transsexual people throughout the world. Current Australian estimates (2000) put the figure at approx. one in every 11,000. Various world literature give an incidence of one transsexual per 50,000. Netherlands (Gooren et al. 1992) and Singapore (Tsoi, 1988) studies cite approx. 1 in every 2,900. Wallbank (2004) cites between 5,000-10,000 men and women with transsexualism in Australia. It's difficult to ascertain the incidence of transsexualism mostly because men and women living with the condition identify as ordinary men or women. They live ordinary lives of men and women they know themselves to be.

Transsexualism cannot be overcome by contrary socialisation nor psychological or psychiatric treatments (Green, 1999). It is a **natural variation** in human physical development.

### Current Legal Situation for men —

After treatment, Australian men of transsexual history can have their legal-sex on their birth certificate corrected to male. As such they have all the same rights and responsibilities as other Australian men, including the right to marry as other Australian men.

In 2002, in the Family Federal Court, a man of transsexual background "Kevin" was granted the right to marry "Jennifer", his female partner, based on recent understanding of the underlying biological cause to the condition. This landmark case signifies greater community understanding and acceptance of Australians (men and women) who have experienced the natural variation in physical formation called transsexualism.

Revised 26 July 2006

### FTM Australia

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

The information contained in this FactSheet is not medical advice.

Please consult with a medical doctor who is qualified to interpret your signs, symptoms, blood tests, and development in the context of your personal medical history.