

Polare Edition 2

Published: December 1993 Last Update: June 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

Editorial

by **Rachelle Alexander, Polare Editor**

Welcome to the second edition of *Polare*, a magazine on gender issues published by the Gender Centre. Thank you for the wonderful letters of support and constructive suggestions which we have received from all over Australia and also for the wonderful contributions which will be used in future editions.

In this edition we take a look at the profile of activities at the Gender Centre and report on the "Social & Support Project". There is also a special feature which provides a personal account of one sister's problems with silicone implants. We take a look at the facts about H.I.V./AIDS and report on the latest information released by the N.S.W. Users and AIDS Association on cleaning fits the new way. "American Indian Gender Crossers" looks back on the transgender people in American Indian culture and "A Male Point of View" provides a personal insight into some female-to-male transgender issues. Madam Zenda looks at your stars over the Christmas period and a roundup of events and activities will help you to plan your gender-friendly yuletide social calendar.

So sit back, enjoy this bumper Christmas edition and on behalf of everybody at the Gender Centre, I wish you a Merry Christmas and all the very best for an exciting New Year.

President's Report

by **Jean Noble, Management Committee President**

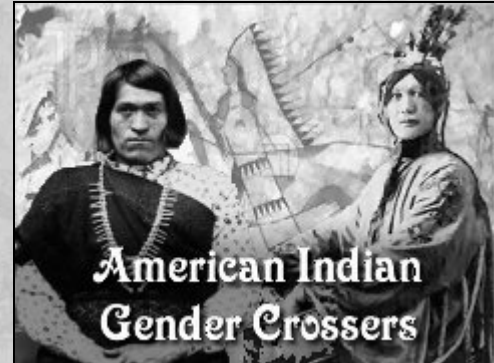
Well it's that time again, yes the *president's rave* and I am extremely pleased to introduce the second edition of *Polare*. On the 20th September 1993 the Annual General Meeting was held at the Gender Centre where the membership voted in a new Management Committee. I would like to welcome the following people:

- » **Treasurer** - Faye Rescigno
- » **Secretary** - Nena Davis
- » **Assistant Secretary** - Gary Lee-Lindsay
- » **Ordinary Member** - Dave Burrows
- » **Ordinary Member** - Kevin Orrell

I would like to thank the membership for their vote of confidence and assure them that I will be working even harder on their behalf. The first meeting of the management committee was held on the 24th November and we are well underway with new business.

We have a number of submissions for funding awaiting approval with various government departments and are

Feature Articles



The Sioux regarded the winkte as wakan (holy) and no attempt was made to prevent them crossing gender.

American Indian Gender-Crossers

North American Indian gender-crossers often held a high status within their tribes, treated as wise, sacred, holy and respected for their shamanism, nothing could be decided without their advice. However not all were treated with respect, some were outcast, others killed.

A Day at the Doctor

When deciding to undergo breasts augmentation, nobody mentions that the product can and does break down over time and can ultimately result in a visit to the doctor with granulation of the breasts (prosthesis to be exact).

What are the Facts About H.I.V. and AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (H.I.V.) and can cause illnesses by breaking down the body's ability to fight infections.

Boys in Prison

Being a female-to-male transsexual in the prison system makes it very hard for people to relate to Tony. The knowledge they have of trannies is of being male-to-female. They've never thought at all about female-to-males.

What to Use When Filling That Gap

In his chats and discussions with other transmen, the one topic which Jamie seems to always encounter sooner or later, is what to use when filling that gap? You know which one. That open breezeway we (as transgender men) seem to be cursed with.

Movie Review: Just Like a Woman

Just Like A Woman, the story of a married transvestite banker with two small children living in London. His family go on a holiday to the United States and unbeknown to Gerald (Geraldine), they come home from holidays a week early.

So What is Seahorse?

The Seahorse Society of New South Wales is a non-profit self--

expecting to hear an outcome by the end of December. Our submission to the "Tribes Project" through the N.S.W. Users and AIDS Association has been successful and we will be making an information video on injecting drug use issues for transgender people and their partners.

help group that provides a valuable service to cross-dressers, their families and friends. Operating since the early-nineteen-seventies, their aim is to reach out to the solitary cross-dresser offering them a safe venue to meet with other cross-dressers.

Our fundraiser "Trocadero 77" proved to be a great success.

Not only did we raise a considerable amount of money, it was a great night. People were still talking about it days after. Many thanks go to the management and staff of Club 77, the staff of the Gender Centre, volunteers and performers who gave their time and talents to make the night so successful. I can't forget to add a special thank you to our hostess of the evening, Carmen who added that very special touch of glamour.

The organisers of the "Black and Blue Party" on the 2nd October were kind enough to donate a substantial amount of money from the proceeds of their ticket sales and I can't thank them enough for their support.

All money raised is being spent on improving conditions for our residents and a donation was made to Boys Will Be Boys, a support group for female-to-male trans.

The "Social & Support Project" came to an end on the 5th October. We held a presentation night for those who achieved certificates of attainment and merit in peer facilitation skills. It gave me a great deal of pleasure to see sisters achieve something for themselves. I would like to thank Detlev Jackson, Wayne Powter, Maxine Ohlmus-Joseph and Julie Phillips for the time and energy they put into this project which achieved such excellent results.

Be assured that we have re-submitted to the AIDS Bureau for funding to run another "Social & Support Project" and hopefully employ a full-time Social & Support Worker to keep the project up and running.

On the 1st December we held a memorial barbecue at the Gender Centre for World AIDS Day. It was great to see so many people come along to remember their sisters and brothers who have died from AIDS and to show support for raising awareness in the community on H.I.V. prevention. We handed out show bags and t-shirts and filled ourselves with food. It was a very hot day, so it was good to see some sisters refreshing themselves in the pool.

Our next social occasion at the Gender Centre is Christmas dinner on the 23rd December and of course, all are welcome! Let's make it a Merry Gender Christmas and a Tranny New Year. For more details, or to R.S.V.P., contact Craig the Administrative Worker at the Centre.

Finally I would like to thank the staff for their serious team effort over past months and I look forward to a happy and productive year to come.

On that note I would like to leave with a few parting words that I hope may inspire:

"May your potential blossom. One planet, one people, one celebration."

Snippets

from the pages of Polare Number Two

On the 23rd September 1993, the Gender Centre held a fundraiser at Club 77 on William Street. The evening was a huge success and 150 people turned out to dance the night away and enjoy the shows. Party goers were wooed by the talents of Carmen, Miss Aeyisha, Lana Turnip, Groovi, Lollipop and Trash. The music was sensational and there was much sweating and gyrating as Detlev Jackson, Faye Raye and Gemma spun those discs. A substantial amount of money was raised and will be used to upgrade the resident's houses of the Gender Centre and a donation will be made to the two transgender community groups, Boys Will Be Boys and Huka Mummies.

The Gender Centre held a Christmas dinner at the Morgan Street premises on Thursday 23rd December from 6:30pm. The Centre also closed for business between 24th December and 10th January. These days it is common for a skeleton-staff to work over the Christmas - New Year period.

The 19th December also saw a fundraiser to raise money to enter a float in the 1994 Mardi Gras. The event was held at Illusions night club, Kings Cross and featured "La Legend" Carmen and Glamour Show and music by Ali. Polly's Club, Australia largest and oldest Gay and Lesbian Social group advertised regularly in the early editions of *Polare*. In the second edition they advertised a new years eve harbour cruise that included a dinner and show, and S.W.O.P. were drumming up interest in *Polare* for a lingerie and sex aid party they were planning for 17th December.

The Gender Centre advise that this edition of Polare is not current and as such certain content, including but not limited to persons, contact details and dates may not apply. Where legal authority or medical related matters are cited, responsibility lies with the reader to obtain the most current relevant legal authority and/or medical publication.

Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc. which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a

forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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American Indian Gender-Crossers

They joined the warriors on the warpath, behaved like women in attending to the food and had magical powers of healing

by Roberta Perkins

Article appeared in Polare magazine: December 1993 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



The Sioux regarded the *winkte* as *wakan* (holy) and no attempt was made to prevent them crossing gender from men to women.

Long before the Europeans came to North America, Indian gender crossing occurred across the continent. It was widely reported by white men in their first encounters with Indian tribes. As early as 1564 a French traveller, Jacobus Le Moyne, in Florida remarked: "When (the Indians) go to war the 'hermaphrodites' carry the food" and "those who are stricken with any infectious diseases are borne by the 'hermaphrodites' to certain places and nursed until they may be restored to full health."

Like the Cheyenne, the Navajo treated their gender-crossers as a third sex with special powers not available to the conventional sexes.

These 'hermaphrodites' were not biologically ambiguous individuals, but simply Indian males who chose to live as women. Le Moyne and other Europeans of his time could only understand gender crossing by describing it as hermaphroditism. His description, however, alerts us to certain phenomenon

associated with gender-crossers among Indian tribes: they joined the warriors on the war path; they behaved like women in attending to the food; and, they had magical powers of healing. A century after Le Moyne, a Jesuit, Jacques Marquette, in 1671 made this observation of Sioux Indians: "There is some mystery in this; the *berdache* never marry and glory in demeaning themselves to do everything that women do. They go to war but can only use clubs and not bows and arrows, which are the proper weapons of men. They are present at the solemn dances ... at these they sing. They are summoned to the councils and nothing can be decided without their advice. Through their profession of leading an extraordinary life, they pass for *Manitou*, that is to say, spirits, or persons of consequence." '*Berdache*' was a term the French explorers used to describe Indian gender-crossers: it derived from an Arab word for 'male prostitute' or 'catamite' (kept boy), but Marquette was clearly referring to gender-crossers and not prostitutes. Once again we see that the Indian gender-crossers accompanied the warriors on the warpath and were treated with great respect for their wisdom and magical skills. In the 1830s the American travelling artist, George Catlin, visited the Sauk tribe and witnessed a ceremony in which warriors openly announced having had sexual relations with *berdaches*, or as the Sauk called them '*i-coo-coo-a*'. Catlin's Victorian upbringing caused him to express his disgust: "He (Catlin preferred to refer to the *i-coo-coo-a* in the masculine pronoun regardless of her demeanour and dress being obviously feminine) is driven to the most servile and degrading duties, from which he is not allowed to escape ... being the only one in the tribe submitting to this disgraceful degradation". This remark implies that the *i-coo-coo-a* was nothing more than a sex slave. But further on Catlin is forced to admit that the *i-coo-coo-a* is "a man dressed in women's clothes, as he is known to be all his life, and for extraordinary privileges which he is known to possess ... (he) is looked upon as medicine and sacred and a feast is given to him annually.

In many other tribes the gender-crossers had high status in their community. Anthropologist Royal Hassrick, in reporting on the Sioux *winkte* (man-woman), found them to be "good shamans (medicine men) who go about calling one another 'sister'. Each one has his own tipi (skin tent), for after men have sexual relations with them their parents put up a tipi for them. The Sioux regarded the *winkte* as *wakan* (holy) and no attempt was made to prevent them crossing gender from men to women. Hassrick claims that the *winkte* were held in awesome respect on one hand and in disdainful fear on the other." He felt this reflected the ambivalent attitude which the Sioux had for the *winkte*, but it sounds more like the typical response Indians had towards all shamans, whether they were gender-crossers or not. In the 1860s the *Cheyenne* Indians had six gender-crossers, or *he-man-eh* (half-men-half-women), as they called them, who all came from the same kin group, the 'Bare Legs' band. These were highly regarded personages who were granted the full status of women by the tribe. Yet, they were more than ordinary women. They were the most powerful beings in the tribe, with supernatural powers beyond even the shamans. Only the *he-man-eh* had the necessary power to handle fresh scalps brought back by the warriors after a successful battle, for the negative power of the enemy whose scalps had been lifted could only be

nullified by the half-men-half-women. And, what's more, after performing this extraordinary feat, the *he-man-eh* passed on their amazing powers to courting couples to ensure they had long and happy lives together.

The most positive response to gender-crossers by any people anywhere in the world came from the Navajos, who referred to those who permanently crossed gender or did so only from time to time as *nadles* ('being transformed'). These were god-like beings whom a Navajo informant told anthropologist W.W. Hill "are leaders like President Roosevelt (and) around the *hogan* (earth dwelling) they will bring good luck and riches. It does a great deal for the country if you have a *nadle* around ... you must respect (them) for they are somehow sacred and holy." The *nadles* were the source of knowledge, wellbeing and protective power for the tribe, for as the informant said: "They know everything. They can do both the work of a man and a woman. I think when all the *nadles* are gone it will be the end of the Navajos." The mythology of the Navajos is full of wondrous deeds performed by the *nadles*, from intervening in a quarrel between First Man and First Woman to their preference for women's roles over men's. The *nadles* were the outstanding artisans and sheep breeders, and usually prominent shamans, choosing one or another of the holy professions, such as a chanter, a curing doctor, a curer of incest, a midwife or a sorcerer. Like the *Cheyenne*, the Navajos treated their gender-crossers as a third sex with special powers not available to the conventional sexes. But, unlike any other Indians, the *nadles* were gods on earth who held the fate and destiny of their people in their hands.

Many attempts have been made by white men to explain the phenomenon of gender-crossing in North American Indian societies, from Le Moyne's hermaphroditism and Catlin's "disgraceful" homosexuality to modern psychoanalytical theories. One anthropologist, Donald Forgey, suggests that Indian boys unable to survive in the competitive world of warriors sought alternative lifestyles as women before they reached manhood. But this was achieved "with a supernatural explanation and justification of their condition." The Omaha Indian gender-crosser, or *min-qu-ga*, claimed to have dreamt their destiny when the moon spirit came to them in a vision and offered them a woman's pack-strap in one hand and warrior's bow in the other. When the boy reached out for the bow the spirit switched hands so that he grasped the pack-strap instead. But, as the old Sioux shaman, Lame Deer, once remarked: "if nature puts a burden on a man by making him different, it also gives him a power." Thus, did the Indians themselves explain why crossing gender and shamanism went hand in hand.

Not all tribes treated their gender-crossers with the deference of the Navajo, Cheyenne, Sioux, Sauk, Omaha and most other plains and eastern woodlands peoples. The Pimas cast their gender-crossers out of the tribe, and the Apaches went so far as to kill them. Among the Mohave the *alyhas* (like a woman) were treated as a joke. But their partners were ridiculed to the effect that they are unable to get a 'real' woman. The poor *alyhas* went to extraordinary lengths to demonstrate their feminine nature, even to the point of deliberately causing constipation, so that they could claim their swollen bellies were due to pregnancy. When they eventually defecated they said that the resultant dung was a stillborn baby, and went through an elaborate burial rite and period of mourning. The people often taunted them by pointing to dog droppings in the village and loudly proclaiming it as one of their children. Others would try to lift up the *alyhas'* grass skirts in an attempt to expose their penises, and when an unfortunate *alyhas'* penis became involuntarily erect and poked through the grassy covering this was an occasion for great communal mirth. The *la' mana* (man-woman) of the Pueblo Indians were better treated. Though crossing gender was generally discouraged by the Pueblos, if a boy was determined to live as a woman no further obstacles were put in his way. The nineteenth century anthropologist Matilda Stevenson reported extensively on a famous *la' mana*, *We-wha*, of *Zuni Pueblo*, who became a leader in the community, and found her to be mentally and physically the strongest person in the tribe. It is likely that this acceptance of the *la' mana* is due to *Zuni* gods being asexual. Similarly, the Cocopah and Yuma also accepted their gender-crossers because they reflected the hermaphroditism of their gods.

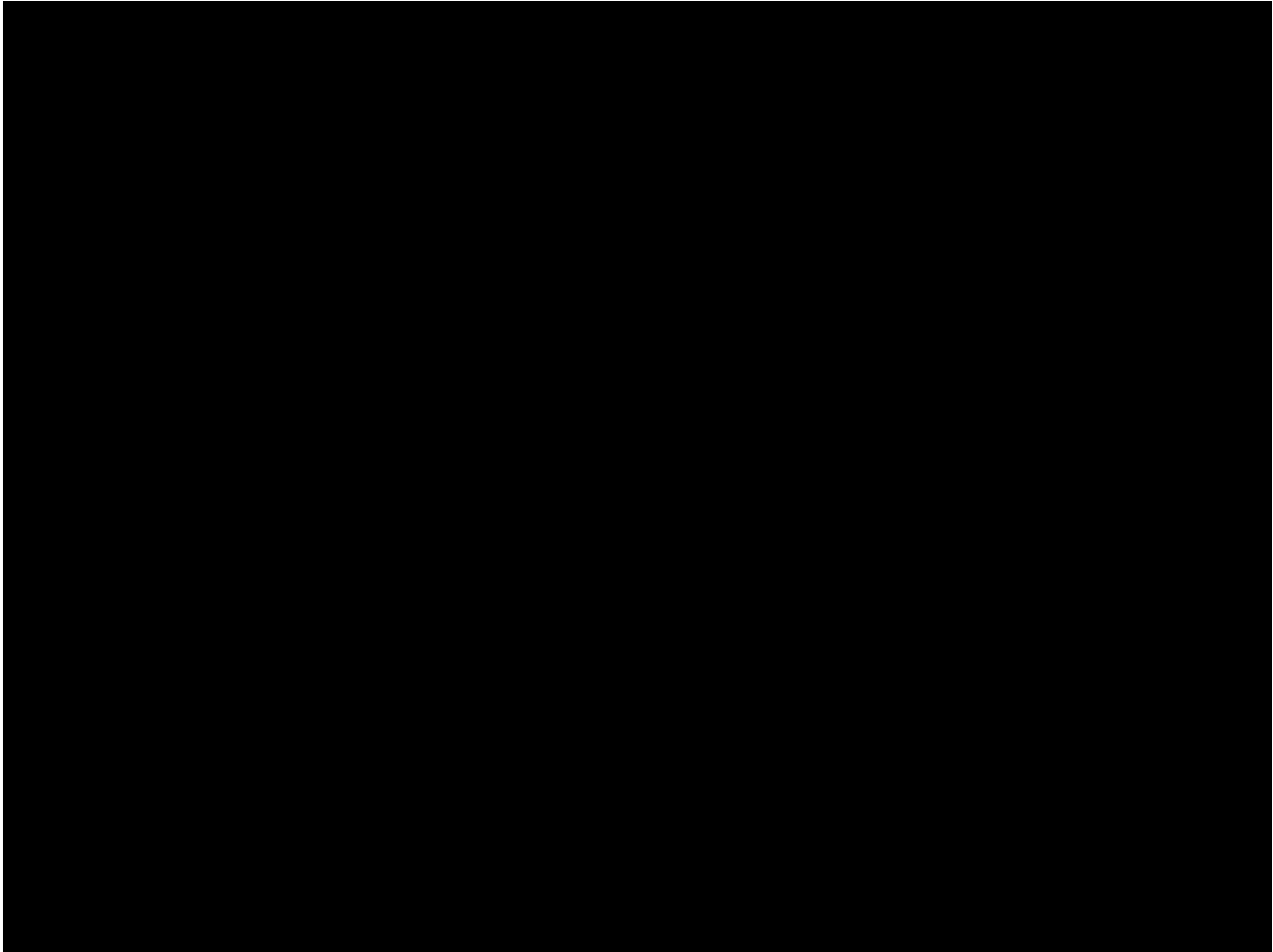
There is very little evidence of females crossing over to masculine roles in North American Indian societies. This might seem surprising given the generally higher status of Indian men, but then the lifestyle of the warrior was much more demanding than that of the woman and fraught with enough danger to dissuade females from taking the route. It has been suggested by some white observers that Indian mothers sometimes deliberately feminized their sons to avoid them dying on the battlefield, but neither parents would contemplate emasculating daughters for the strong possibility of being killed in war. On the other hand, in some warlike tribes like the Iroquois, where women had political power and the usual warrior's death was by prolonged torture (causing a high rate of suicide among men) there is no evidence of either women nor men crossing gender, while gender-crossing occurred amongst the peaceful Pueblos where the sex roles were similar. The fact is though that women's roles in many Indian societies were not as confining as men's. For instance, Black feet women were known to have acquired great wealth in horse herds usually achieved only by chiefs and prominent warriors, and, during the Indian wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth century white soldiers frequently commented on Indian women fighting



'Berdache' was a term the French explorers used to describe Indian gender-crossers: it derived from an Arab word for 'male prostitute' or 'catamite' (kept boy)

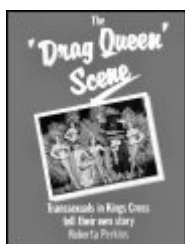
side by side with their men folk. The anthropologist George Devereux reported on female gender-crosser, Sahaykwisa, a Mohave *hwame* (like a man), who insisted on being treated as a warrior. But the people called Sahaykwisa 'split vagina' on account of the way he and his 'wife' laid with vaginas touching. Sahaykwisa bragged about his imaginary penis and strutted around the village in a manly fashion. Everyone humoured him with this behaviour, but when he tried to enter the war councils of warriors he was refused outright and he was not allowed to touch the men's weapons just as women weren't. Obviously, Sahaykwisa did not threaten the social order by 'pretending' to be a man, but when he wanted to enter the warriors' inner sanctum he posed a direct threat to a masculine prerogative. This rebuttal was too much for Sahaykwisa, who ended his torments by drowning himself in the raging Colorado River.

An overview of historical and contemporary Native American concepts of gender, sexuality and sexual orientation. This documentary explores the *berdache* tradition in Native American culture, in which individuals who embody feminine and masculine qualities act as a conduit between the physical and spiritual world, and because of this are placed in positions of power within the community.



Roberta Perkins

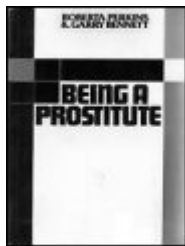
Roberta Perkins established the Gender Centre (then known as Tiresias House) in 1983. She is also a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at The University of New South Wales and has conducted many government-funded research projects into prostitution. A transsexual herself, she has the confidence of the people she interviews; a sociologist, she has counselled transsexuals for a number of years; an activist, she has worked with them in the struggle to overcome the problems they face every day of their lives. Roberta is also the author, and co-author of five books and scores of journal articles on sex work research in Australia and has also taught Native American Studies for many years in Sydney



The Drag Queen Scene: Transsexuals in Kings Cross
Author: Roberta Perkins Publisher: Allen & Unwin (1983)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0868610474

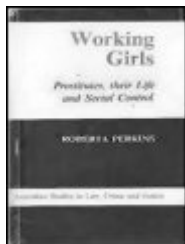
Through a unique series of frank interviews, *The Drag Queen Scene* deals with the experiences of male-to-female transsexuals who live and work in Sydney's Kings Cross area. It focuses on twelve people — showgirls, strippers, bar girls and prostitutes. Each of the twelve speaks for herself, providing first-hand insights into life and work in her world — a world a few people understand. Their stories uncover the raw reality behind the shallow popular view of the "Drag Queen". These revealing every-day accounts demonstrate how much accepted attitudes are based on ignorance, prejudice and callousness. By offering the reader a rare opportunity to view a closed subculture as its participants see it,

The Drag Queen Scene is an attempt to break down the resistance facing transsexuals, to influence changes in social attitudes and the law. In this book, twelve voices, hitherto silent, challenge the reader to question the stigmatising and ostracising transsexuals endure.



Being a Prostitute: Prostitute Women and Prostitute Men (with Garry Bennett)
Author: Roberta Perkins and Garry Bennett Publisher: Allen & Unwin (1986)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0868616780

Constant media coverage and popular concern about prostitution, recent changes to legal and administrative regulations governing prostitution in its various forms in its several States, and the emergence of organised groups to represent the views and interests of prostitutes in public discussions and to influence policy formation ensure that the subject retains a high level of visibility and social significance. At the same time there have been remarkably few empirical studies of prostitution in Australia and our knowledge is largely confined to sensationalised reports of criminal cases and media exposés. So a book giving detailed accounts of the perceptions and experiences of a variety of prostitutes, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual, of different ages and background, and covering the diversity of forms of occupational types and organisational settings of prostitution at the present time would seem to be timely.



Working Girls: Prostitutes, Their Life and Social Control
Author: Roberta Perkins
Publisher: Australian Institute of Criminology (1991)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0642158765

From Abe Books: This book has three objectives: 1. To demonstrate empirically that prostitutes are basically ordinary women with only their occupation distinguishing them from others; 2. To bring to the general public a balanced, well-informed view of prostitution, shed of its tawdry reputation; 3. To convince legislators to adopt a more practical method of dealing with prostitution.



Sex Work and Sex Workers in Australia
Author: Roberta Perkins
Publisher: University of New South Wales Press (1994)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0868401744

From Google Books: *Sex Work and Sex Workers in Australia* is one of the most comprehensive books on the sex industry. This book's main focus is on prostitution and it is broken down on many levels: female, male, transsexual, health care, oral histories, and foreign workers (e.g.. Thai). It is very easy to read and one leaves this book with an excellent history lesson as well as viewpoints from both men and women which balances this book.



Call Girls: Private Sex Workers in Australia
Author: Roberta Perkins and Frances Lovejoy
Publisher: U.W.A. Publishing (2007)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 1920694913

From Booktopia: *Call Girls* casts a penetrating, red light gaze upon the upper echelons of the worlds oldest profession private sex workers who use the telephone as a means to solicit clients. Containing frank accounts from women working in the Australian sex industry. *Call Girls* puts a human face on this hitherto shadowy, clandestine world as it documents how many women became sex workers; run their businesses; maintain their health; and how the call girls work affects their relationships with husbands, lovers and families. Far-removed from the moralising, victim stereotypes and *Pretty Woman*-inspired fantasies which pervade popular culture, *Call Girls* places the world of the sex worker within social, political and legal contexts which will surprise and change the preconceived notions of many readers.

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A Day at the Doctor

Doing your Homework before heading to 'Medico Land'

by Unknown Author

Article appeared in Polare magazine: December 1993 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Not knowing anything about silicosis at the time, I ventured into 'medico land' for the diagnosis.

Well girls, we have all been through the harrowing ordeal of going to the doctor for our appointment as today's guinea pig with mystery symptoms. I have lately been confronted with our gracious medical fraternity and have run across some amazing discoveries.

... This has taken its time to circulate to the girl on the street and definitely even more time to reach our doctors that we trust so much.

My mystery symptom for the day was granulation of the breasts (prosthesis to be exact). These well loved, often appreciated, sometimes heavy breasts have succumbed to old age. You may say "well what's the problem?" The problem is that when these little beauties were bestowed on my good person, nobody told me (or anyone else for that matter) of how the product can and does break down over time.

Naturally, when a foreign body is inserted, our own defence mechanisms (immune system) fly into action to defend the body against the intruder. The defence takes many forms, mine was that the bag did not rupture but granulated instead. This is where the surface breaks down and small pin holes develop allowing small droplets to either escape or rest on the bag surface, thus forming the granulation. Sounds pretty straightforward doesn't it? Not so. There is one complication that no one has calculated yet and that is dealing with the doctors while they deal with you.

Not knowing anything about silicosis at the time, I ventured into 'medico land' for the diagnosis. What an exercise in frustration it has turned out to be. It seems that doctors, including the plastic surgeons, really have little knowledge of the product, how it can break down or the physical effects of age and faulty products on the individual. Litigation cases are being filed around the world for women who have had problems with implants. No two cases are the same and symptoms and side-effects (physical and psychological) are different for each individual. The real grassroots frustration comes with presenting these symptoms to your doctor without you being fobbed off or made to sound like some whinging old thing with nothing better to do.

The people I have dealt with have been at the top of their chosen profession and can assure me that nothing serious has happened. They confirm that there is granulation but fail to explain where the granulation came from and what the long-term effects are. All of my knowledge has come from reading material from the United States where discoveries are being made and documented. This has taken its time to circulate to the girl on the street and definitely even more time to reach our doctors that we trust so much.

I have found that I am the educator this time around with more questions and arguments than they care to hear. By no means have I started a personal war on the medicos with the argument over implants but it does make you think: who's fooling who? So far I've been patronised, offered good deals for a quick removal, had many comments on how great they look but no medical diagnosis of the physical condition of them or me; "Cosmetically great", "physically lumpy" and "no comment". Leaves one feeling a bit insecure.

Personally I hope the little dears hang on (or down) for as long as the bolts hold but it would be nice to say: "Hey, my breasts have taken on a life form of their own, not to mention a new shape" and hear a word of support in return.

When presenting other symptoms that could be related to the prosthesis I am given a stumped look, an assurance that they are cosmetically okay and no other avenue for tests or enquiries. Sound frustrating? It is!

The cost is another thing that doesn't sit well with me. The money that I've paid out in time, travel and wear and tear on the old body does add up. And let's not overlook the physical discomfort.

Anyway, this is the trip to 'medico land'. So be warned, don't take everything on face value and if you can, do your homework.

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What are the Facts about H.I.V. and AIDS

Transmission, Symptoms, Testing and Treatment

by Unknown Author

Article appeared in Polare magazine: December 1993 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused by the virus Human Immunodeficiency Virus (H.I.V.). H.I.V. can cause illnesses by breaking down the body's ability to fight infections. H.I.V. has been detected in the blood, semen, breast milk, and vaginal fluids of people with H.I.V. and all of these have been implicated in transmitting H.I.V.. People with H.I.V. remain infectious and can continue to infect other people throughout their life.

Transmission

H.I.V. is passed from one person to another by any of these body fluids entering the bloodstream of another person. H.I.V. is easily passed from one person to another when even a small amount of infected body fluids enters the blood stream of another person. It can be passed on through unprotected sex - anal, oral (in theory) and vaginal - and through sharing needles and syringes, needle stick accidents, and from a pregnant woman with H.I.V. to her foetus.

H.I.V. can enter your bloodstream through mucous membranes or tiny abrasions or cuts on your vagina, penis, anus, and in theory, your mouth and hands.

Having a S.T.D. can cause inflammation, open lesions and breaks in the skin, which allow the H.I.V. virus to pass into the bloodstream more easily.

Symptoms

Within six weeks after infection some people have an acute flu-like illness with fever, night sweats, loss of appetite, nausea, aches and pains, sore throat, headache and diarrhoea. After this, most people don't develop any symptoms for many months and even years after infection. Most people with H.I.V. look and feel healthy even though they are infectious. The following symptoms can occur early in H.I.V. infection but can also be the signs of other viral infections:

- » significant and persistent weight loss;
- » increasing and persistent tiredness;
- » fever and night sweats;
- » swollen lymph glands; and
- » persistent diarrhoea.

H.I.V. infection progresses over a long period of time and H.I.V. related illnesses develop which include secondary cancers, brain disorders and other infections.

Testing

A blood sample is taken to be tested for H.I.V. antibodies. If this test is positive, it means that you have been infected with H.I.V. However, if the result is negative, this does not necessarily mean that you are not infected with H.I.V. It takes from four weeks to three months after infection for most people's bodies to make the antibodies to H.I.V. (the window period). During this time, the H.I.V. antibody test will be negative, but you may still have H.I.V.

Deciding to have an H.I.V. test is not an easy decision. Pre-test counselling is essential so that you are informed about what your options are and to make sure that you are given all the information about what positive and negative results really mean. Getting an H.I.V.+ result will have very profound effects on your lifestyle and may affect your decisions about working and other jobs, your relationships, your family, having children, travelling etc. Make sure that you talk to a counsellor before you decide to go ahead and get tested for H.I.V.

Treatment

There are a few medically prescribed treatments for H.I.V. infection including Azidothymidine (AZT), Didanosine (ddI), Dideoxycytidine (ddC) and other prescription drugs. Some of these are only available if you are participating in a trial of the drug. There are also a number of treatments available for H.I.V. related illnesses. Good nutrition, meditation, a range of alternative treatments and balanced

exercise programs are all recommended. However, as yet there is no known cure and no vaccine for H.I.V.

The Gender Centre is committed to raising awareness of H.I.V. / AIDS issues in the transgender community. We will report on H.I.V. / AIDS treatments and developments.

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Boys in Prison

The System Has No Understanding of F.T.M.s

Article appeared in Polare magazine: December 1993 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015 by Tony



When I talk to professional people, they have no idea where to start and no knowledge of what you are.

My name is Tony, I am thirty-three years old and have been a female-to-male (F.T.M.) transgender person for seven years. I am currently on remand at Mulawa Women's Detention Centre. Being an F.T.M. tranny in the prison system makes it very hard for people to relate to me. The knowledge they have of transnies is of being male-to-female, never having thought at all about F.T.M.s.

In here people look at me as a freak and some inmates look at me as the closest thing to male that they can sexually identify with.

The system has no understanding of F.T.M.s. Speaking for my own life, it has been very hard for me. In here people look at me as a freak and some inmates look at me as the closest thing to male that they can sexually identify with. It gets a bit much to handle sometimes, but I cope.

As far as the police and courts are concerned I belong at Long Bay Prison for men, not giving a damn about the dangers. There is no special treatment for F.T.M.s.

When I talk to professional people, they have no idea where to start and no knowledge of what you are. We had a 'link up' day back in September where I got the chance to meet up with the Outreach Worker from the Gender Centre. We haven't had much of a chance to talk, but just knowing she is there for me and other F.T.M.s is reassuring. It's about time we got this kind of support.

When I first started out my life was hell. There was no one there to support me through my surgery and the outcome emotionally was heart-breaking. Now we have the Gender Centre for support, their magazine *Polare* and the *Boys Will Be Boys* newsletter. F.T.M.s now have somewhere to turn, things have come a long way in seven years.

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What to Use when Filling that Gap

Learning From Experience

by Jamie B

Article appeared in Polare magazine: December 1993 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

In my chats and discussions with other transgender men, the one topic which seems to always come up sooner or later, is what to use when filling that gap? You know which one. That open breezeway we (as transgender men) seem to be cursed with. It is very difficult to feel the tiniest bit manly when an inquiring person (of either gender) gives our pouches a little squeeze (to let us know they are interested) and then stands back in open-mouthed shock when nothing "interesting" can be found. Many of us, at one point or another, have found ourselves in this humiliating position.

Yes, it would be nice to stand at the urinal like the other guys but my life wouldn't end if I can't.

When this problem became an issue for me, I tried various methods in an effort to give myself the manly profile I craved so much. I started with a small dress sock, rolled up and pinned to the inside of my jocks. I quickly realised that this method was neither realistic nor was it particularly comfortable. In fact, it was downright painful, especially when the pin opened itself, which it seemed to do at the worst possible moments. It is fairly simple to find a toilet in a crowded nightclub but to find one in the Queen Street Mall is another matter altogether. It also made me a candidate for the Ministry of Silly Walks!

My next crotch filler was the use of a substance known in Queensland as "slime". I found it couldn't be purchased here for love or money. I was devastated! However, on a trip to Sydney, I found a similar substance going under the name of "dinosaur gel". I discovered it to be bright fluoro green and felt particularly disgusting to touch (which is probably why the kids love it). I tried several experiments before settling on the gel inside one condom inside another. This was to stop any accidental breakages. The gel is almost impossible to get out of your pubic hair once it finds its way there, whatever the method. I rapidly made the painful discovery that a gel-filled condom jiggling around inside your pants has a few problems. The latex catches on your pubic hair and can pull it completely out if you move. There is also a build up of heat which can break you out in a heat rash that brings tears to your eyes. Popping the condom inside a cloth bag solves the hair pulling problem but not the heat. I quickly became tired of constant heat rash and tossed the whole lot into a drawer with my sock.

So what have I learnt from all of my experiences? Yes, it would be nice to stand at the urinal like the other guys but my life wouldn't end if I can't. And yes it would be lovely to have a great bulge to show off to other men but they won't think any less of me without one. As for sex, well other parts of me are far more talented (with lots more stamina) than any dick I can think of. What I had first thought of as a need to have a dick (therefore making me a man) is really nothing more than a want. And we don't always get what we want. My gender is not made from a bulge in my pants, it is made from what is between my ears and from the way I behave. Being a "self-made" man means I can make myself into the sort of man I can be proud of and not ruled by my genitals. I am man-conscious not dick-conscious. It makes me a better person, I think.

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Movie Review: Just Like a Woman

She Stole His Heart, He Stole Her Clothes

by Janelle

Article appeared in Polare magazine: December 1993 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

The story is about a married transvestite banker with two small children living in London. The wife and children go on a holiday to the United States and unbeknown to Gerald (Geraldine) come home from holidays a week early.

Gerald has not cleaned up the family home and Geraldine's clothes and make-up have been left lying about the home. When Gerald's wife walks in on this she becomes most upset and throws all of Gerald's and Geraldine's clothes from the balcony. Gerald is seen collecting all of Geraldine's clothes from the street.

Personally, I found this quite funny as it related to my own position before I was found out to be cross-dressing, and like Gerald I was eventually forced from the family home to seek other accommodation.

Gerald finds other accommodation with a divorcee in a typical London home. He settles in quickly and Geraldine starts to surface of a night, when she thinks that the rest of the house is asleep, to go out to transvestite clubs.

He then becomes romantically involved with his landlady and eventually tells her of Geraldine's existence. The landlady takes the news a lot better than he had anticipated and begins to take Geraldine on outings such as shopping on a busy weekend. I found this really amusing as I could relate to myself being among throngs of people for the first time.

The two have a stormy love affair which includes Geraldine. Both the affair and Gerald's job hit low points but the rest of the storyline follows the landlady, Gerald and Geraldine working towards a classic fairy tale ending.

I enjoyed the film because in many ways I could relate to it in a personal way; wife, two children, family home, looking for my own personal niche in life etc. I thought it was well worth seeing, although from my own experiences I would say it was a touch over the top.

... I found this quite funny as it related to my own position before I was found out to be cross-dressing

Just Like a Woman

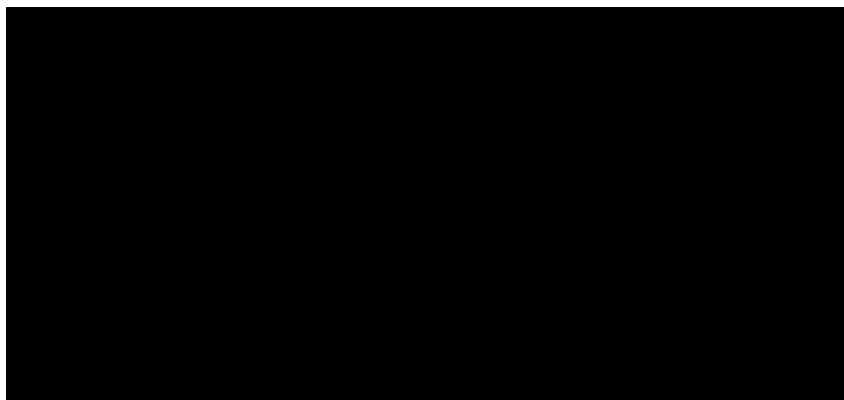
Directed by: Christopher Monger

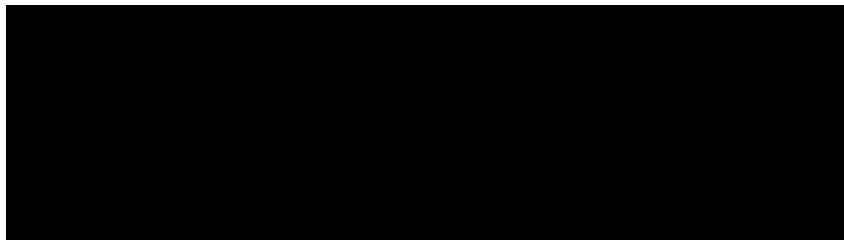
Starring: Julie Walters, Adrian Pasdar, Paul Freeman

Producer(s): Nick Evans

Released: 1992

Just Like a Woman is based on an autobiographical account of transvestism and transsexualism which was written by Monica Jay and published in 1992. Monica Jay, a middle-aged mother of three grown-up children, divorced her husband after a long and bitter marriage and had to take in paying guests to fill her large and crumbling home. One of her lodgers, a young businessman, confessed to her that he was a transvestite, and after her initial reaction of shock and amusement, she tried to understand his condition and to help him. Introduced to the underworld of drag queens, bisexuals and transsexuals, she came to enjoy a triangular relationship with the lodger, Gerald, and his alter ego, "Geraldine", before facing reality again. Monica Jay has since been registered with Birmingham Social Services as a counsellor for transvestites and their families, and also counsels for the Beaumont Trust and the Transvestite/Transsexual Support Group of London.





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So, What is Seahorse

Cross-Dressing with Dignity

by April

Article appeared in Polare magazine: December 1993 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

Seahorse is known formally as 'The Seahorse Society of New South Wales Incorporated'. It is a non profit self-help group funded solely by our members' contributions, internal fund raising, attendance fees and the odd donation.

We provide a valuable service to cross-dressers, their families and friends. Our current 'rules' define a cross-dresser in broad outline simply "as one who dresses and behaves as a member of the opposite sex" and this was done on purpose.

Historically, the ideas and actions of our founders restricted membership. Some ten years ago, these rules were changed but the legacy of those early days caused our image to seem narrow and restrictive. Nowadays, anyone who feels they fit this broad definition is welcome, as are their family and friends.

Seahorse has been in operation since the early 1970s and always seems to have had a membership of around eighty people. Twenty or thirty joining each year and around the same number dropping out. I think this statistic more or less defines the niche role that Seahorse plays.

We reach out to the solitary cross-dresser who is stuck in a closet with no likelihood of ever getting out and we offer them a bigger closet. We gently entice them out of their homes and their secrecy and show them that there is a world outside.

Starting with a safe venue where they can meet with other cross-dressers, we prove that they are no longer all alone, that they are not perverted and that they have no reason to be ashamed. Then we show them the outside world with outings to sympathetic restaurants or dances, take them shopping and encourage them to go further a field. We introduce them to other more adventurous groups and, as their self-confidence increases, we finally teach them that they don't need us.

Everyone has their own balance between masculinity and femininity. Some members move off to those other groups and they go with our blessing. We are happy to have been an agent in bringing them together. Some are happy to remain with Seahorse, perhaps helping still more people out of their closets as they were helped previously. Others are happy just to belong. They have found the world and they do not need it: Still others will leave us and return to their original closet. It is their decision and they can decide from knowledge rather than ignorance.

Most of our advertising is done by word of mouth, which includes organisations like Lifeline and The Gender Centre or through feature articles in magazines and the local press. There is always a burst of interest when Seahorse gets a mention in an 'agony column', and once they know the name, they can find us in the phone book. Our recently completed pamphlet has been sent to most community organisations and is beginning to generate some responses. Work has now started on a second pamphlet directed towards shopkeepers, explaining how to deal with cross-dressers without embarrassment and to the maximum profit of both parties.

We encourage people to contact us by way of our Information Line which is presently manned on Thursday evenings with our answering machine connected at other times. This link is intended to provide help and advice on any topics related to cross-dressing, from 'where to buy clothes' to coping with the issues that arise. It's basically peer support and, as we always point out, is non-expert counselling. We frequently suggest other avenues of contact for professional help, generally through The Gender Centre.

The Information Line is staffed by our committee on a roster basis. We have a number of partners and family who are willing to chat to others in similar circumstances. We prefer to arrange for the partner to ring the person concerned rather than to divulge home phone numbers but, with permission, this is sometimes done once the bona fides of callers has been established.

At present, nearly ten percent of our membership consists of partners or family members and we actually experience a low enquiry rate. Despite this, those who do contact us have provided very positive feedback, frequently urging their partners to join and get involved. Our third pamphlet project will be aimed towards telling partners how Seahorse can help.

At present, we only have one female cross-dresser. We'd love to have more. If you're out there, give us a call.

Our motto is 'Cross-Dressing with Dignity'. We strive to achieve this and we are non-discriminatory. Currently our membership has just passed 130, so we must be doing something right!

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