

Polare Edition 1

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

The first edition of *Polare*, a journal devoted to the interests and issues of transgender and gender diverse people produced by the Gender Centre, was published in September 1993. The magazine quickly became very popular with subsequent issues initially published quarterly. *Polare* reported on the cultural and social changes in the nineteen-nineties and also aimed to raise awareness about the needs of people with gender issues, their partners, families and friends.

The first edition featured a profile of the staff, services and philosophy of the Gender Centre, an editorial and a report from the president of the Gender Centre's management committee as well as the feature articles listed to the right.

Editorial

by Rachele Alexander, Polare Editor

Welcome to the first edition of *Polare*, a journal on gender issues published by the Gender Centre. *Polare* reports on cultural and social changes in the 90's and aims to raise awareness about gender issues and the needs of people with gender issues, their partners, families and friends. It provides a forum for discussion and debate about many aspects of gender and will be an informative resource for service providers and other people interested in gender issues. *Polare* will present special articles about the historical, social, medical, research and political aspects of gender issues. Regular features will include:

- » **"Briefly"**: A media roundup of special interest;
- » **"Postscript"**: Opinions, debate and dissent through letters to the editor;
- » **"Now Write This Down"**: Calendar of key upcoming conferences, meetings and social events;
- » **"Life, Love and Liberty"**: Personal experiences and expressions;
- » **"President's Report"**: Major developments and activities of the Gender Centre;
- » **"Politicking"**: Update on political activities; and
- » **"Directory Assistance"**: Local, rural and international services currently available to people with gender issues and their partners, families and friends.

To introduce the journal, the first edition features a profile of the staff, services and philosophy of the publisher, the Gender Centre. This first edition also has an historical theme and includes a number of special articles which look back on the past, including "The Scene Was Mean", a brief history of the drag queen scene in Sydney in the nineteen-eighties, "Great Outings of History, getting sprung

Feature Articles



Stella Walsh, naturalised American and former Polish athlete competed at the 1932 Berlin Olympics.

Great Outings of History

Part of transgender folklore includes the traumatic and soul-destroying phobia of being "outed". But while it has happened to many of us, it probably won't have been as severe as the historical outings of Pope Joan, Musician Billy Tipton and Polish Olympian Stella Walsh.

The Scene Was Mean

The subculture of Sydney's transgender people in the nineteen-eighties was centred around Kings Cross and Darlinghurst. labelled "drag queens" regardless of our motives, we became victims of this ignorance as showgirls, as prostitutes and bar girls. We lived in fear of being sprung.

I'm Trans-Gendering

Mood swings, increases in libido and self-obsession are but a few of the issues we confront in transition as female-to-male transgender people. But who cares about our partners and their needs? Does anyone really care about the emotional state or needs of our partners?

A Daughter's Perspective

As a seventeen year-old female who is travelling through puberty, when I was first informed of my parent's decision to change gender from female-to-male, I was devastated and shocked. It's an extraordinary step to take, yet I personally found it confusing and difficult.

The History of Seahorse

Before 1970, in a world without Seahorse, going out dressed in public would often lead to police action. The purchase of those "special" items was best accomplished through a mail order house. Back in 1967, Pauline began to try and make contact with other cross-dressers.

through the ages", and "The History of Seahorse", a brief history of cross-dressing and "I'm Trans-Gendering", provides a male viewpoint.

Polare will be published quarterly and is only partially funded. There is no subscription rate currently, however we may have to introduce a small fee in the future if costs become unmanageable.

We are very keen to hear your comments on our first edition, suggestions for improvements or features, and a guide for contributors is on page seventeen.

Our next issue will include more information on the political scene, an article on H.I.V. and how it effects people with gender issues and an article on breast augmentation. So don't miss out.

President's Report

by Jean Noble, Management Committee President

As you may already know, Tiresias House Inc. has changed its name. Since the Special General Meeting of our association members on 18th April 1993 we are now known as The Gender Centre Inc. This is more than just a name change, it is a major expansion of the services offered by the organisation.

These major changes are the result of an intensive service review which has been ongoing for the last two years. The new service is a response to the needs identified that review process which included feedback from our clients as well as their service providers.

Although Tiresias House was funded to provide semi-supported accommodation for transsexual people, it had always provided services to a wider range of people with gender issues. The service has always responded to an overwhelming number and range of requests for support from people at varying stages of exploring and resolving their gender issues. However, these efforts were never supported by adequate government funding and the needs of clients greatly outweighed the resources of the service.

As part of the review process, the staff and management committee acknowledged that people with gender issues had always been the client group. The priority was identified as a need for increased funding to be able to meet their diverse needs. Successful submissions have now made an expanded service possible.

The Gender Centre now provides a broad range of services to people with gender issues which includes community, social and support, outreach, drug and alcohol, resource development and residential services.

The Gender Centre welcomes all people with gender issues, their partners, families and friends and is committed to developing and providing services and activities which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices.

The Gender Centre is also committed to educate the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, families and friends in N.S.W. We also act as an education, support and referral centre to other organisations and service providers. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

The demands on staff time have been at a maximum throughout 1993 as these types of organisational changes demand a high level of focused staff activity and a cohesive team effort. For their great personal effort I wish to extend a heartfelt thanks on behalf of the management committee to our Projects Manager Rachelle Alexander, Community Worker Deidre Yates, Administration Worker Craig Skinner, and our Residential Support Worker Paula Hartigan. I also wish to formally welcome the newcomers to our staff team our part-time Community Worker Lea Westin, Outreach Worker and part-time Community Worker Camille Singleton, Resource Development Worker Catherine Collier and our Social & Support Workers Detlev Jackson, Wayne Powter and Maxine Ohlmus-Joseph.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the association members for their ongoing support for these exciting new initiatives and for their inspiring attendance at our special general meetings. On behalf of the staff and management committee, I wish to extend an invitation to the members and others to attend our barbecue lunches which are held at the Gender Centre on a regular basis and which provide an opportunity for you to call in, meet the staff and find out what is happening at the Centre.

Which brings me to my last point, the Annual General Meeting. This will be held on the 20th September 1993, 7:30pm at the Gender Centre, 75 Morgan Street Petersham. Membership closes on the 1st September. To be eligible to vote at the Annual General Meeting you must be a current member and you may not apply for membership after close of business on the 1st September.

If you wish to nominate as a candidate for the management committee, your application must be in writing and should be accompanied by a *Nomination for Management Committee* form. Candidate election statements will be posted to all current financial members in the second week of September for your consideration. Voting will be by optional preference and secret ballot of the current financial members present at the A.G.M. and will be supervised by an Electoral Officer.

Membership Application forms, *Nomination for Management Committee* forms, a copy of the *Annual Report* and any additional information which you may require can be obtained by phoning Craig on 9519 7599 Monday to Friday 10:00am - 4:30pm.

In conclusion, I would like to express appreciation for the service magazine *Polare*, which has been made possible by the sheer hard work of the Editor Rachelle Alexander and Editorial Assistant Craig Skinner and one of the management committee members, Faye Raye, who gave both her time and design knowledge freely.

This has been an exciting year and the time has flown by, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as President and on behalf of the Management Committee I wish the Gender Centre all the best for the future and look forward to your attendance at the Annual General Meeting.

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.

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.

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Great Outings of History

Getting Sprung through the Ages

by Aidy Griffen

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



Olympic Athlete, Stella Walsh

Part of tranny folklore and folk knowledge revolves around the phobia of being 'sprung'. It has happened to the worst of us and, though they are often loath to admit it, the best of us. Some trannys accept it philosophically, shrugging their shoulders and murmuring that it goes with the territory. For others it can be traumatic and soul destroying. But whatever your personal reaction, your problem probably won't be as severe as the following cases. In fact, the following cases may count as among the most drastic cases of being 'sprung' in history.

Poor Billy [Tipton], he had successfully crossed the gender divide for a lifetime only to be sprung, posthumously, by an undertaker

The ninth century of European history produced the intriguing case of the person who has become widely known as Pope Joan. In the year of our lord, 855, Pope Leo IV, passed away and was succeeded by Pope John VIII. The new Pope is popularly referred to nowadays as Pope Joan, for it seems that 'he' turned out to be a 'she'. In what must surely count as one of history's most startling exposures, it is said that the new Pope died during childbirth, apparently on the steps of the then St. Peters. It is said that her death, together with that of the offspring was witnessed by a large number of people, according to a report issued by one of her successors, Pope Julius III. Not only did they witness his/her death, it seems they actively participated in it - for poor Pope Joan was stoned to death.

Rumour has it that to this day, there is a special chair in the Vatican upon newly elected Popes are required to sit. This chair is said to have a hole cut in the seat. The newly elected Pope sits on the chair and displays his genitals through the hole, so that it can be independently confirmed that he is properly credentialed for the job. It is unclear whether this involves dropping his daks or lifting his drag. A psychoanalytic or even a symbolic analysis of this ritual would be, dare I suggest, rather revealing.

Was poor Pope Joan hounded into his/her grave by genderphobes, it would be rash to assume that the harassment stopped there, or even that things have improved with time. Prejudice is not cured by the passing of time. For some, after a lifetime of successfully living in their chosen gender and of achievement in that gender, there was simply no escape from the hate-crazed psychos who police gender.


In 1989, the death of Billy Tipton, a well known jazz musician and bandleader was reported. Upon Billy's death, the funeral director discovered that Billy, married with three adopted children, was in fact female. One of Billy's sons, with admirable loyalty, commented "He'll always be Dad to me". Dick O'Neill, Billy's drummer for a ten year period, could remember instances of Billy's 'masculinity' being questioned: "But I would almost fight anyone who said that, I never suspected a thing". Billy's ex-wife, who seems not to have been aware of Billy's real past, justified Billy thus: "there were certain rules and regulations in those days (i.e. rules of female exclusion) if you were going to be a musician". Poor Billy, he had successfully crossed the gender divide for a lifetime only to be sprung, posthumously, by an undertaker.



Jazz Musician, Billy Tipton

A similar fate awaited Stella Walsh, a naturalised American who had formerly been a Polish runner and competitor at the 1932 Olympics, where she won a gold medal. In 1980, after a lifetime as living as female, she was caught in crossfire during an attempted bank robbery in the U.S. She died of gunshot wounds. Following the less than necessary intervention of the local undertaker, it was revealed that Sheila possessed male genitals. Suddenly, recollections of her 'man-like' stride poured forth from people who had failed to notice or remark about it for the previous half century. In an act of regrettable pettiness, the International Olympic Committee demanded and received the return of her gold medal. What an ignominious fate! Gender fluid people will sympathize, while making a mental note never to trust an undertaker, no matter how cheap their rates. The relentless tyranny of assigned gender roles are only too familiar. Nowadays, it seems, even death is no escape.

Stella Walsh

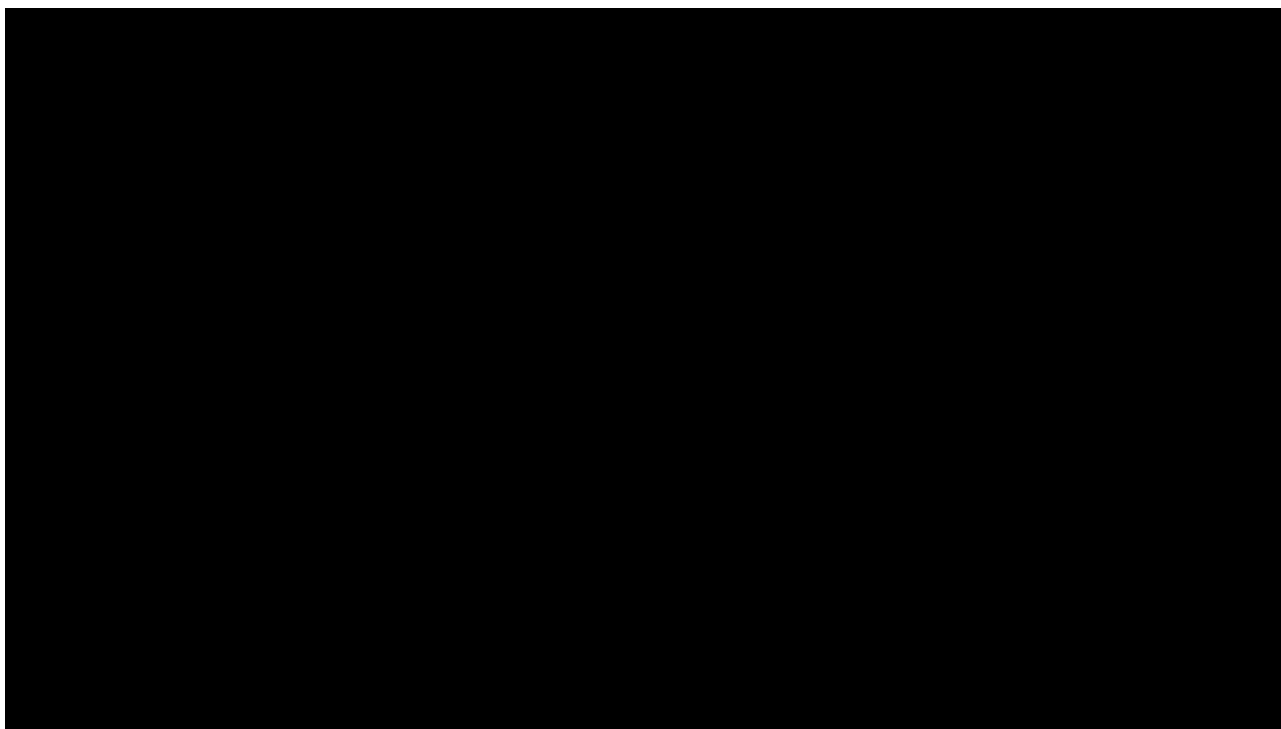
Edited from Wikipedia:  Born in 1911, Stanisława Walasiewicz, also known as Stella Walsh was three months old when her family emigrated to the United States. Fast and agile, she started her athletic career while at public school in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1927 she easily won the competition for a place in the American Olympic team, however, she was not an American citizen and could not obtain citizenship under the age of twenty-one. The success of Halina Konopacka, a Polish athlete who won gold in the discus throw at the 1928 Summer Olympics, inspired Walsh to join the local branch of Sokół, a Polish sports and patriotic organization active among the Polish diaspora. By the late 1920s she was already a well-known athlete winning numerous American national championships, usually under the name of Stella Walsh.






Despite finally being offered American citizenship she changed her mind and instead adopted Polish citizenship that had been offered to her by the Polish consulate in New York.

In the 1932 Summer Olympics she equalled the then current world record of 11.9 seconds in both the heats and the semi-finals of the 100m, a feat she repeated in the final which she won. Upon her return to Poland she almost instantly became a well-known personality. She was welcomed by gigantic crowds in the port of Gdynia, and a few days later, she was awarded the Golden Cross of Merit for her achievements. She was also again chosen the most popular Polish person in sports and held that title for three years. In the 1936 Olympics in Berlin she attempted to defend her Olympic title; but was beaten to the title, coming second, in 11.7 seconds. Ironically in hindsight, Stephens was accused of being male and was forced to submit to a genital inspection to prove otherwise. After the Olympic Games, Stella declared her plans to retire from an active sports career but changed her mind and instead moved back to the United States where she resumed her amateur career. After the war, in 1947 she finally accepted American citizenship and married boxer Neil Olson. Although the marriage did not last long, she continued to use the name Stella Walsh Olson for the rest of her life. She won her last United States title in 1951 at age forty, and was inducted into the U.S. Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1975.

Walsh was killed during an armed robbery in Cleveland, Ohio, on 4 December 1980. An autopsy showed that she possessed male genitalia, although some sources suggest she also displayed some female characteristics. Detailed investigations have also revealed that she had both 45X0 and 46XX chromosomes. The controversy of her biological sex remains unresolved, and the situation is further complicated by the fact that many earlier documents, including her birth record, state that she was female. There was also some controversy as to whether all her records and achievements should be erased.



A short documentary is in production about the track athlete and Olympic gold medal-winner Stella Walsh, her murder, and the controversy surrounding her gender identity. Information about the documentary can be found on the [Stella Walsh website](#)  and the [Stella Walsh Documentary Facebook page](#) . Producers of the documentary are also asking for help in completing their documentary by reaching out to the Cleveland, Ohio community for people who knew or have information, photos, and/or video about Stella Walsh and can be contacted by [email](#) . 


Further Information

[The Bilerico Project](#) : Stella Walsh's Secret 

[The Washington Post](#) : The Runner's Secret 

Billy Tipton



From Wikipedia:  Billy Tipton (1914–1989) was an American jazz musician and bandleader. Born in Oklahoma, U.S.A., he grew up in Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A., where he was raised by an aunt after his parents' divorce. As a high-school student, Tipton went by the nickname Tippy and became interested in music, especially jazz, studying piano and saxophone, and as he began a more serious music career, he adopted his father's nickname, Billy, and was more actively working to pass as male by breast binding and packing. At first, he only presented as male in performance, but by 1940 was living as a man in his private life as well.

Billy played with many different house bands throughout the United States, occasionally touring with them before establishing the Billy Tipton Trio, which consisted of Tipton on piano, Dick O'Neil on drums, and Kenny Richards (and later Ron Kilde) on bass. The trio gained local popularity and during a performance on tour in California, a talent scout from Tops Records heard them play and gave them a contract. The Billy Tipton Trio recorded two albums of jazz standards, namely "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Billy Tipton Plays Hi-Fi on Piano", both released early in 1957. The Trio continued until the late 1970s, when worsening arthritis forced Tipton to retire from music.

For seven years, Tipton lived with Betty Cox, who was 19 when they became involved. According to Cox, they had a heterosexual relationship. Tipton kept the secret of his extrinsic sexual characteristics from Betty by inventing a story of having been in a serious car accident that had badly damaged his genitals and broken some ribs, so that to protect the damaged chest he had to bind it. From then on, this was what he would tell the women in his life. In 1960, he ended this relationship to settle down with nightclub dancer and stripper Kitty Kelly. They adopted three sons, John, Scott, and William. After Tipton's death, Kitty gave several interviews about him and their relationship. William described Tipton as a good father who loved to go on Scout camping trips. Their adopted sons became difficult to manage during their adolescence. Because of the couple's ongoing arguments over how they should raise the boys, Tipton left Kitty in the late 1970s, moved into a mobile home with their sons, and resumed an old relationship with a woman named Maryann. He remained there, living in poverty, until his death.

In 1989, at the age of 74, Tipton had symptoms he attributed to emphysema and refused to call a doctor. Actually he was suffering from a haemorrhaging peptic ulcer, which, untreated, was fatal. It was while paramedics were trying to save Tipton's life, with son William looking on, that William learned that his father had female anatomy. Tipton was pronounced dead at Valley General Hospital. The coroner shared this with the rest of the family. In an attempt to keep the secret, Kitty arranged for his body to be cremated, but one of their sons went public with the story. The first newspaper article was published the day after Tipton's funeral and it was quickly picked up by wire services. Stories about Tipton appeared in a variety of papers including tabloids, as well as more reputable papers such as *New York Magazine* and *The Seattle Times*.




Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton

Author: Diane Wood Middlebrook

Published Mariner Books (1999)

I.S.B.N.-13 978-0395957899

From Amazon Books:  The jazz pianist Billy Tipton was born in Oklahoma City as Dorothy Tipton, but almost nobody knew the truth until the day he died, in Spokane in 1989. Over a fifty-year performing career, Billy Tipton fooled nearly everyone, including Duke Ellington and Norma Teagarden, five successive wives with whom Billy lived as a man, and three children to whom he was father. As Billy Tipton himself said, "Some people might think I'm a freak or a hermaphrodite.

I'm not. I'm a normal person. This has been my choice". This jazz-era biography evokes the rich popular-music history of the Great Depression and reads like a detective story.

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The Scene was Mean

The Drag Scene in Sydney in the 1980s

Extracts from the book of the same title published by Harper Collins Publishers Ltd. 1983, I.S.B.N.-13 978 086861047X by Roberta

Perkins

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Sydney's Kings Cross

What was the subculture of Sydney's transgender people like a decade ago? Well, for a start, we were still

influenced by the medical terminologies of "transsexual", "gender dysphoria", "transvestism", and "sex reassignment" which was the process of surgically reconstructing the genitals to simulate those of the opposite sex. This operation was considered the ultimate transition in changing gender by most transgender people and for many it represented a magical cure to all our social problems.

The common folk, the press and the police persisted in their ignorance by labelling all of us "drag queens" regardless of how our private psychological or socio-sexual motives or physical reconstruction.

Then, we were victims of this ignorance: as showgirls we had to pretend that we were really men who simply dressed in drag to make a quid, as prostitutes, we copped the double stigma of "whore" and "queer", and those of us going completely straight lived in mortal fear of being "sprung". To today's much more candid transgender people it must seem like the dark ages. But, one only needs to consider what the situation was like just ten years before that, when public ridicule, arrest and psychiatric treatment were our common lot. Just walking down the street in a dress could mean instant arrest for "offensive behaviour" and public exposure by the press, whose response to us couldn't have been more sensational had we arrived from Mars. It could bring us a bashing by the good people of Sydney, who would have considered broken bones or even death just deserts for our outrageous behaviour. With a past such as that, in 1983 we thought we had progressed a long way in coming-out as "trannies". But, as I mentioned the term "drag queens" was in such common usage that I called this era in the early 1980's "the drag queen scene" when I wrote my book of the same title about the transgender subculture which had emerged from the oppressive period of the 1970's and beyond. It was a true subculture, with the norms and values unique to the people involved in it and a structure that was easily identified by the participants. It was also easily identified by many outsiders and therefore was an open subculture, in contrast to the earlier clandestine subculture existing within the framework of the then much oppressed gay milieu.

The "Drag Queen" Scene

So, let's take a closer look at this "drag queen" scene of the early 1980's. I began my investigation of it in 1981 as a significant part of my Honours degree. The scene was then centred in Kings Cross and adjacent Darlinghurst, so I used the Wayside Chapel (where I worked as a crisis counsellor) as my base from which I wandered into the bars and streets to seek material for my research. I found four distinctive social environments within the subculture, each derived from an economic or survival pursuit. The four groups living, socialising and working within these environments I referred to as "showgirls", "strippers", "bar girls" and "prostitutes". There was some mobility between the different environments especially between the domains of the bar girls and prostitutes, although least often the realm of the showgirls and the others. There was also a perceived hierarchy by the participants in the subculture, but there was not a unanimous consensus on this. Most seemed to agree that the showgirls were at the top of the hierarchy, based on the relative respectability of their work in front of an assumed straight audience, followed by the strippers, due to the undisclosed nature of their work, then the bar girls, who were young and yet to prove themselves, while the prostitutes were on the bottom because their job was considered the most distasteful of all. However, as the prostitutes pointed out, were the hierarchy measured according to earning power, then they would be on top. Most of the subculture participants expressed the highest admiration for those transgender people who had ultra-straight jobs in their preferred gender. I will now deal with each of these social environments in turn.

The Show's The Thing.

The showgirls worked in four so-called "drag shows" in Kings Cross and Darlinghurst. The best known of these was the glittery *Les Girls* in the heart of the Cross. Its audience was very straight and, since the venue was advertised widely, it was included on the tourist circuit with many patrons arriving in such tour groups as

... we had to pretend we were really men who simply dressed in drag to make a quid.

... women in the audience dash to the toilet to touch up their make-up and faces immediately

"Sydney By Night". The showgirls nearly all lived permanently as women and a few had undergone genital realignment surgery. Even fewer conformed to the stereotypical image of the drag artist, or man who simply does a show in drag. Most of the girls thought their audience naive. "It's an extra-suburban trip for them", said one girl, while another remarked "They think to themselves aren't we a lovely lot, but they're glad their son's not one of us". The reactions of the men in the audience were generally ambivalent. Some felt threatened or embarrassed by the presence of the showgirls, particularly after the show when the performers visited patrons at their tables. Most agreed that the girls were attractive enough to date, but would not ask them out once they knew about them. The women were much less threatened or embarrassed by the showgirls, but as one woman remarked "I've noticed how women in the audience dash to the toilet to touch up their make-up and faces immediately after seeing the girls in the show".

after seeing the girls in the show.

The drag shows in Oxford Street in Darlinghurst catered for gay audiences. Some showgirls preferred performing for a gay crowd because it was more appreciative and more vocal in appreciation. It was also more critical. The drag shows in the gay clubs were generally more sophisticated, more satirical, more *risqué*, and more political than *Les Girls*. They also offered shows with a contemporary topical content, for straight drag was not appreciated by gay audiences who wanted their entertainment to carry subtle (and not so subtle) social messages. In general, the gay drag shows would have been too offensive or incomprehensible to the typical *Les Girls* patrons, although straight people did attend these shows. These, though, tended to be younger and more trendy than *Les Girls*' patrons, who, one girl thought, was "living back in the 1950's ... what they think of as today's stuff is actually fifteen years-old ... they couldn't handle today's stuff."

Getting Ya Gear Off.

While the showgirls were known to be the transgender people, or "drag queens" in the popular parlance, the strippers performed before a mainly male audience indistinguishable from the genetic female performers on stage. More of the strippers had undergone (genital realignment) surgery, and none of them dressed as women simply for the occasion, but all lived permanently in a female role. Those who had not been operated on went to extreme and often uncomfortable lengths to disguise their male genitals, and generally they were so skilful that few in the audience could identify them as transgender people. Most of the strippers agreed that the transgender women made better strip-tease artists than the genetic females. They prepared their acts more diligently, made more stunning costumes and acted more sensually on stage. As for the rivalry between the strippers and showgirls, one girl put it succinctly: "The (drag) queens don't like us (transgender) strippers. They think we are fooling people, while they are more respectable". There was little inter-mixture between both groups, each being more integrated into their own social and economic spheres. Thus, the transgender strippers tended to socially mix with other strippers than with other transgender women. Besides, the strippers tended to stay away from places and associations that were likely to lead to a disclosure of their transgender status.

I could not obtain interviews with patrons attending the six strip clubs then operating in Kings Cross as this would have revealed the fact that at least some of the strippers they were gazing upon were transgender people. However, my observations of the men in the audience indicated that they were unable to tell which of the performers were biologically male. In fact, the transgender strippers generally received the largest applause due to the greater eroticism and animation, as well as their more dazzling costuming. Where men suspected that the strip clubs employed transgender women they often played guessing games based on supposed tell-tale physical attributes that distinguished all men from all women. Invariably, they guessed incorrectly.

At The Watering Hole.

A number of bars and hotels in Kings Cross were favourite social centres for many transgender people. Here they could meet and chat about their experiences, exchange views on life in the Cross, or their latest date, buy drugs, show off their latest outfits, and, of course, pick up men. As a group the bar girls who made the pub and club the centre of their social life were younger than either the showgirls or strippers. In fact, many of them were new gender-crossers, coming-out publicly for the first time. These venues were ideal places to meet other transgender people of both sexes, since some transgender men also frequented them in their efforts to establish themselves in a masculine role. Attracting men was a chief objective for most of the bar-girls, as acquiring a boyfriend was seen as the most positive claim to a feminine role. Competition was fierce not only between the regular bar-girls, but also between them and the showgirls who might drop into the place for a drink after a show. These latter in their glamorous make-up and costumes invariably created a sensation and nothing was more damaging to a young bar-girl's ego than to sit all night in a bar chatting up a prospective boyfriend only to see him

All of the men I interviewed claimed to be strictly heterosexual and "happily married", and many spoke of transgender women most disparagingly.



Darlinghurst's infamous Taxi Club

whisked away by a statuesque showgirl who just called in for a moment. Love the reinforcement of ego, however, were not the only bar-girls motivations for attracting male bar patrons. Some of the girls had an eye on the gentlemen's wallets and developed amazing skills at lifting them, or "rolling", to use the colloquialism for this form of pick-pocketing. This crime was justified by the girls who participated in it as balancing the economic inequality between themselves as unemployable transgender people and the men who seemed to have everything.

The guys who inhabited the bars in the Cross were generally not interested in a relationship. Most were married and motivated by sexual gratification without payment or at most the price of a drink. Bar-girls aware of this at least tried to get a dinner or a few hours of

drinking paid for before taking the guy back to their apartment. Most of the men were well aware that many of the girls on the premises were transgender, so I was not ethically restrained from asking them questions about the women in the bar. All of the men I interviewed claimed to be strictly heterosexual and "happily married", and many spoke of transgender women most disparagingly. Yet, when I asked why they came to the bars in which most of the female patrons were transgender, the usual reply was that they were more sexy than other women and were definitely "easier". When the question of genitals was raised one gent seemed to sum it up for all the male patrons by stating that "one hole's as good as another".

The two most popular bars in the Cross were the Bottoms Up bar in the Crest Hotel, and the Venus Room, a dive situated on Hughes Street. The former appearing to be the venue most favoured for meeting and girl-talk and less concerned with pick-ups. It had a wholesome heterogeneous flavour in that it catered for every kind of colour, creed and sexual orientation, and the diverse crowd seemed to mix well without the usual racial and sexual discrimination that was found in the rest of society. It was a place where bigotry was left at the front door. The Venus Room was a place for pick-ups and little else. The place oozed sex and libidinous pursuits, and you could smell it. Girls jumped onto tables to strip on a whim, the decor was a sizzling red, and rooms were provided upstairs for unholy practices. Although most sex in the place was granted freely, much of it was also bought. It was also a prime place for the rollers. I think more wallets were lifted from inebriated gentlemen there than at any other place in Sydney. When a wallet was lifted a girl would immediately make for the toilet, where she could extract the money and could deposit the empty wallet into a hole in the prefabricated wall. One night a girl was sitting on the toilet, counting her loot, when she tossed the lightened wallet into the hole and the whole wall came tumbling down, burying her beneath hundreds of wallets. To use a common paraphrase, it was the straw that broke the camel's back.

On The Street

Many transgender prostitutes came from the other three groups, as well as the much more clandestine transgender people from the other suburbs. But, the majority were also bar-girls and most of these possessed large heroin habits. Some surgically transformed women worked in brothels around Sydney, but most of the transgender women in prostitution worked the streets, the most popular part of which was Darley Street and adjacent streets in Darlinghurst. These were the days of pre-AIDS sex and legal *laissez faire*. In 1979, the New South Wales Government, in a reformist frame of mind, repealed the law on street soliciting, along with many other prostitution laws. Without fear of arrest transgender, female and male sex workers moved onto the residential streets of Darlinghurst and began operating in front of resident's front yards and apartment buildings. Within a short span of time these quiet little back streets became choked with motoring and pedestrian clients and business was booming for the girls. Clients with cars were taken to dark spots not far from the area, or if on foot, then to nearby apartments rented by the girls. It wasn't long before residents began complaining, lobbying their local members and forming vocal activist organisations which held public meetings. The residents received sympathy from the press, who published whatever fabrication was uttered by residential spokespersons, and from the police, who used whatever street offence laws they could lay their hands on, from "serious alarm and affront" to "obstructing traffic". The transgender workers received most of the attention, due, no doubt, to a greater police bias against them than other workers. Many of the transgender prostitutes complained of police bashings, harassment after hours and using degrading terminology. All of this public attention brought more traffic to the area from curious voyeurs and tourists, which eventually turned the place into bedlam. The girls complained that business had declined dramatically as a result of this and they were continually having to deal with "yobbos", "westies" and moral maniacs. Finally, the Government put an end to it by bringing back a law on street soliciting on ANZAC Day 1983 (appropriately enough, since the area sometimes took on the semblance of a battlefield). It was inconceivable that the government that it would try to see the situation from the girls' perspective.

Working the streets was a dangerous occupation and nearly every girl had a story to tell on physical assault, including knife attacks, vicious beatings and pack rapes. At the height of the resident's anti-prostitution campaign the girls had more to fear from the locals than from misogynists and homophobics posing as clients. On one night a resident in a high rise apartment block overlooking Darley Street flung a Molotov Cocktail out of a top storey window, resulting in one girl being carted off to hospital. Why, you might ask, would anyone want to work under such conditions? Well, some girls had uncontrollable drug habits and prostitution was the most lucrative means of acquiring the kind of cash needed to feed the habit. Others made small fortunes out of the business, for \$3,000 to \$5,000 for a weeks work was not unusual then. Many considered it was certainly worth taking a risk for, especially since most of the transgender women involved in sex work were unemployed before they went onto the streets and had very little prospects of obtaining any other sort of employment. The human tragedy in this scenario is that the only work available to most transgender people is that which is unhealthy, dangerous, illegal and, for many, degrading.

The Changing Face of a Subculture.

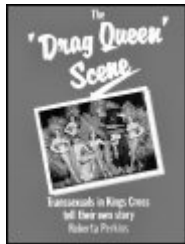
What this article illuminates is that subcultures are never static. They change, sometimes quite dramatically, from time to time. In the case of the transgender subculture, for centuries it remained hidden and clandestine, although social reactions to it went from fear and superstition in the Middle Ages, when transgender people were burnt as associates of the devil, to the kinds of public ridicule witnessed in the 18th and 19th centuries when a day in the stocks being pelted with rotten vegetables and dung was the usual punishment for sexual aberration, to the present legal minefield of sexual identity and the medico-social identification of transgender. The "drag queen" scene offered transgender people an identity, their own social environment and a public profile for the first time in the history of gender crossing.

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



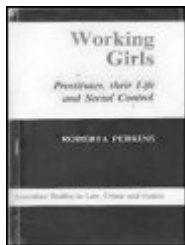
The Drag Queen Scene: Transsexuals in Kings Cross
 Author: Roberta Perkins Publisher: Allen & Unwin (1983)
 I.S.B.N.-13 978 0868610474

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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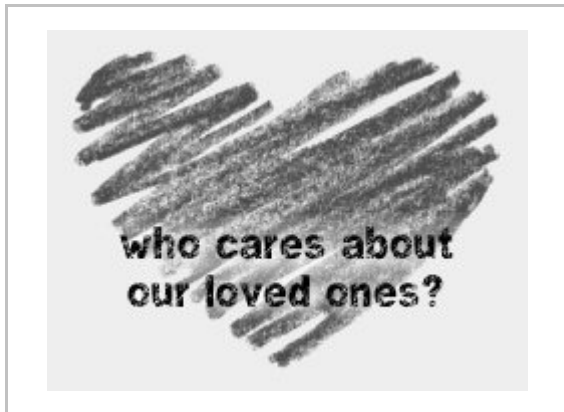
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I'm Trans-Gendering

But Does Anyone Really Care about the Emotional State or Needs of Our Partners?

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



I'm trans-gendering from female-to-male and I'm okay thanks. Though if not, I've always got a counsellor's, psychiatrist's or at the very least a local doctor's trained ear (not to mention those of my peers) to bash.

In the event that we have an ongoing relationship, it needs to be asked what our partners are going through emotionally.

Recently there has been much press about female-to-males, in fact, it could be said we're flavour of the month. I have been one of those female-to-male transgender people interviewed for articles and news stories which, for the most part, I have been pleased with what I've read and seen.

What amazes me about the whole process I'm going through, is that no one (aside from a few polite and general questions asked) seems to care about the process which our significant others (partners in particular) are also undergoing.

For female-to-male transgender people, mood swings are often dramatic and inconceivable increases in libido, self-obsession to the point of talking incessantly about ourselves and a lack of self-confidence are just a few of the many personal issues we confront daily.

Okay, so there are some things we don't have complete control over, but there are some we do. The most important being that we have made the decision to trans-gender. Here, we are in control of whether we continue or discontinue this process. Obviously, if we continue, we do so with the knowledge that we must become, as much as possible, in touch with, and in control of, our physical, emotional and spiritual state of mind and body.

In the event that we have an ongoing relationship, it needs to be asked what our partners are going through emotionally. Naturally, they can't control anything we're going through, though they have a certain degree of control over their own emotions and feelings. Invariably, they're with us because they love us and for this reason alone, tolerate our apparent 'much ado's' about nothing.

So who cares about our partners and their needs? There are support groups, the Gender Centre and doctors available to us. The media are eager to do stories, to brandish our faces and lives across the screen or fill the papers of women's magazines, but does anyone really care about the emotional state or needs of these people, our partners.

This is not to say that the Gender Centre counsellors, psychiatrists and doctors are not available for them, but I find it questionable that there appears to have been little or no encouragement in the past to set up their own much needed support group.

No doubt, a successful society consists of many and varied people, preferably in possession of a stable and mental and emotional perspective. A greater consideration towards individuals indirectly involved in the trans-gendering process would create a healthier and holistic support network for the transgender person and importantly their often overlooked partners.

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A Daughter's Perspective

Adjusting and Adapting to a Parent's Transition

by Cherie

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



There are so many questions that swim around in my head which are unanswered or are simply incomprehensible to me.

I am a seventeen-year-old female who is travelling through puberty, which is a confusing and difficult time in life. My parent at present, is transitioning from female-to-male. This in itself is an extraordinary step to take. My parent seems to be happy and content with this decision. I personally find it just as confusing and difficult, if not more so, than puberty. It is also something I have chosen to face alone.

With all of the emotions and feelings that I was inundated with at the time, I also became withdrawn from everyone and everything that surrounded me.

For a person to have a mother-figure for sixteen years and then all of a sudden receive a father-figure in exchange, life becomes rather complex. When I was first informed of my parent's decision of changing gender, I was devastated and shocked. I am sure you would be too!

It took a while to actually stomach what was really happening to the person I loved, cherished and called 'mummy' since I could first talk. It was such a shock that when it finally hit me, I became violently ill and there was not a cure in the world to aid me in my recovery, not even 'mummy'.

With all of the emotions and feelings that I was inundated with at the time, I also became withdrawn from everyone and everything that surrounded me.

It is a long and sad process that takes time to get through. You seem to go through a grieving process, just like when someone dies. In a way they have not died, but are reborn as a new person. The person inside is still the same, but the exterior has changed. They still love you and care about you just as they did before. It is somewhat like plastic surgery and they feel good about the new person that has been constructed.

Sometimes it really gets to me, like on Mother's Day, birthdays and Christmas. I reminisce over the 'good old days' and how things were and I cry like Niagara Falls. It really hurts and it is so difficult to try and understand why. There are so many questions that swim around in my head which are unanswered or are simply incomprehensible to me.

I will always love my parent and learn in time that the exterior is not what really counts, but what is on the inside that is so important.

I try not to be judgemental over that new exterior and just accept the person inside. Although, it is hard and this acceptance takes time. Sometimes when I see my parent I can't seem to remember them as being any different, but I know deep down inside that they were different and my heart is crushed and so are all the fond memories from the past. Although, the fond memories of the past really never change.

No matter what happens, I know that in my heart my parent will always love me, and I will always love my parent. Male or female my parent will always be the best parent I could ever ask for. I would never trade my parent in for anything in the world, EVER!

All you can do is adjust and adapt to overcome the bad spots. Life gets better as time goes on and so does the understanding.

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The History of Seahorse

The Seahorse Society of N.S.W.

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



Picture if you will, a scene twenty-one years ago. A world without Seahorse, where going out dressed in public would lead to police action and the purchase of any of those 'special' items was best accomplished through a clandestine mail order house. TVs, of course, still exist, but they sit in isolation. Possibly they will have come across others with like inclination but, like ships in the night, they have separated and become memories.

To protect their image, no reputable newspaper would accept our advertising.

This is what faced Pauline back in 1967, when the lack of companionship finally helped her to decide to try and contact some other cross-dressers. But how to do it? To protect their image, no reputable newspaper would accept our advertising. So Pauline wrote to a mail order house and was eventually contacted by Joan. Well, Joan knew Rosemary in Melbourne and Carole, a ship's officer who appeared on occasions from the U.K. This led to correspondence, but it was not until 1968 that they all met. Then, during dinner, they discussed the hypothetical number who could be sharing their meal and they decided to do something.

Their first newspaper advertisement was as explicit as possible: "TV enthusiast would like to meet people with similar views and interests". Most of about thirty replies were genuine watchers of Coronation Street, but some talent was found which encouraged them to try again in 1969, when the Kings Cross Whisper winkled out the nucleus of a club. After much discussion, a framework of security and confidentiality was laid and they set out to meet some new friends.

The official inaugural meeting of the club took place in Sydney in 1970 when the name Seahorse was adopted and the club was really born.

Pauline's work allowed her to travel around Australia so she was able to contact the interstate people who had replied and embryo branches were formed in Melbourne, then Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth. Meanwhile, Sydney was growing slowly though the meetings were still very sporadic. During 1971 and early 1972, meetings were held at Mona Vale. A constitution was drafted during this time and the first committee elected, with Rosemary as foundation President. Trina and Wendy also joined the Society at this stage.

1973 and 1974 were years of consolidation. New members continued to join, meetings became more regular and the newsletter was started. The pressure of work overseas caused both Rosemary and Pauline to drop out, and Jill became the second President with Trina as her Secretary. Times were changing and society was taking a more liberal view of people regarded as 'different'. The media also became less restrictive and increased advertising resulted in greater membership. The work of the club grew, and with the advent of more sophisticated members, some with understanding wives, together with the growing self-confidence of the longer standing members, they became more daring and in doing so, grew more determined to claim an accepted place in society.

During 1974, Wendy became the third President and in the adventurous hands of Trina, the newsletter turned into *Feminique* and took on a national flavour. The magazine was well received by all states and was used as an organ for publicity. Late in 1974 a breakthrough was made when Jill, Wendy and Trina appeared on the Mike Walsh Show. TVs on TV! This was followed by an article in *Cleo* magazine and suddenly membership enquiries ran hot all over the country. Further television, and numerous radio interviews followed, and links were formed with universities, hospitals and social guidance groups. Seahorse also took part in a government funded psychiatric study into transvestism.

To further place the club squarely in the public eye, a seminar 'Transeminar 76' maintained the spate of publicity. By now the public libraries in both Sydney and Melbourne had a standing order for *Feminique* to be displayed on the shelves, and the club was listed in the Directory of Public Services as a self-help counselling group. So well known did they become that in 1978, *Feminique's* editor, Trina was forced to change her name by a namesake who was not into cross-dressing.

But it was difficult to maintain such dizzy heights. By 1979, the doldrums were beginning to set in, although in September, the first meeting of Seahorse New South Wales was held in Marrickville where meetings have since been held, much to the relief of wives, tired of having to clean up their homes after each meeting. By the end of 1980, the original organisers had departed and the national force disintegrated leaving independent clubs in each state. The New South Wales club continued its outings, to restaurants, theatres, shopping and discos but no more irregular, and with Trina's departure in 1981, lay dormant for several years.

Each new leader does a great job, but all the others tend to stand around and watch until that person disappears from exhaustion. At the end of 1983, when Secretary Helen disappeared, New South Wales dropped to a mere four members until Edwina managed to regenerate it. Caroline started an enthusiastic recovery in 1984/85 publishing *Feminique 25*, but a similar event happened when Caroline suddenly disappeared early in 1985. Luckily, Dorothy, Kim and Joyce were on hand to keep us together. Since then we have spread the load and duplicated the records, so if it should happen again, the club would at least still have a list of its own members. We are currently re-establishing the links which faded during the doldrums and beginning to make more outside outings. Invitations from television still come in from time to time, so I'm sure that a period of expansion will again be possible.

Today we have an active committee who have taken office while the society is still thriving, so the future looks better than it has for years. We have had further articles in *Cleo* and *Australasian Post*. We now have our own telephone line with people available to talk to anyone interested in the subject of cross-dressing. Times and circumstance could change. As with most other things in life, what you get out of it depends on what you are prepared to put into it. Unfortunately, during our early days of cross-dressing, what you get out of it often depends on what other people put into it. Those of us who are established in the society put a lot of effort into helping those who are still trying to get out of their closets. Many members are still firmly in the closet and this makes the planning and holding of meetings difficult. The hosting of such meetings has tended to fall on the same people each time. Now, thanks to the Gender Centre, Seahorse now has headquarters in which to meet and plan the next moves. This should make the future much easier.

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