

# Polare Edition 27

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## Editorial

by Craig Andrews, Polare Editor

**T**his is the first of our "bumper" issues - 44 pages. Hope you all enjoy it - please voice your opinions on the increase in pages.

Corrective Services have a policy now on transgender inmates, encouraging to see these changes.

If you have any counselling qualifications or equivalent, please consider lending your support to the Volunteer Support Line that the Gender Centre has available.

Three pages of "Letters to the Editor" this time - and great reading there for everyone.

We include the report on the fantastic result of Tyra Hunter's mother's efforts to bring accountability to fruit in the U.S. a sour victory indeed.

## Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

**M**any of you will be aware of the new transgender prisons policy that was placed into effect on 23rd October 1998. A policy of this nature was first contemplated in 1993 and was close to implementation in 1996 but unfortunately the then policy was found to contravene Anti-Discrimination legislation. I am pleased to report that the revised policy which has been endorsed by the A.D.B. represents a very positive result for the transgender community.

The primary criteria by which a person will be determined to be transgender will be wholly on the basis of self-identification. When a person so identifies they will be immediately afforded one out protection and will be not be transported with other inmates. This is significant because it is during initial incarceration and during transportation that most cases of assault and sexual assault are reported.

From here the inmate will be taken to the M.R.R.C. at Silverwater where they will enter into immediate case management to determine which gaol they will ultimately be housed in. In most cases a male-to-female transgender will be housed in a female prison. It is also likely that a female-to-male for safety reasons will also be housed in a female gaol.

Since self-identification is the key to accessing the program, it is important that transgender people reveal their transgender status if arrested. In many cases this will be clear but for those in various stages of transition or those who "pass" effectively this may not be the case. For the "passing" female-to-male, failure to self-identify could place him at enormous risk of sexual assault if he is housed in a male gaol.

## Feature Articles



**John Wayne doesn't sit back in his rocking chair and ask his wife to do things for him!**

### The Real Man

What are the images and ideas in our head that tell us how we, and other men, should be? Bulging biceps? Physical power? Massive intellect, political and military power? A great lover who gives women shuddering orgasms? Who or what exactly is the real man?

### \$4.5 million in Damages Awarded After Transgender Death

Tyra Hunter lay at the accident scene being treated by emergency services, upon discovering her male genitalia, one of them exclaimed, this ain't no bitch, it's a nigger, he's got a [phallus] and balls. Treatment was immediately discontinued. Tyra later died in hospital.

### Transgender Debate: Against Exclusion

The Left Alliance members within N.O.W.S.A. at R.M.I.T. move to exclude transgender women from their feminist organising women's movement amid widespread opposition from the Melbourne Star Observer, campus women's collectives, e-mail networks and queer collectives.

### Made in Thailand

Shirley travels to Phuket for her date with Dr. Sanguan Kunaporn and her long awaited sex reassignment surgery. She explains in detail her nervousness and how Dr. Kunaporn's mild manner had put her at ease and certain she had made the right choice to travel to Thailand.

### Identity

Michael identifies as a man but the mirror doesn't support this, he still doesn't see the man that he wants to project. Sometimes he gets confirmation from other people that he's changing, from friends who haven't seen him for a while. This is Michael's story.

### Why We Lie

Jessica's explains why she and perhaps other transsexual people have told lies, and suggests that it's because we are

However, we also benefit significantly from the right to choose. If a male-to-female wishes to be housed in a male gaol then she can simply choose to not apply to the transgender program. Such choice will mean that she will be subject to all the procedures that apply to inmates in the gaol she is housed. Nonetheless she will still have full right to access female clothing, cosmetics and ongoing hormone treatments.

terrified of rejection or what else might happen when others find out and that it's also to protect the extremely fragile shell that keeps us alive.

Inmates currently in the system have all been approached and informed of their right to now apply for transfer to a gaol of their gender identification.

While past treatment of transgender people may cause individuals to fear self-exposure I would encourage people to do so to minimise the risks that we have been previously exposed to in the gaol system. On 15th December, I provided training, along with Angelene Falk from the A.D.B. and Lee Downes, author of the policy and Governor of Emu Plains Correctional Centre. Training was provided to key people from various departments within the Department of Corrections. Two more training sessions are planned in the new year. I would report from that training session that participants all displayed an enormous commitment to this policy and I believe we can look forward to fair and respectful treatment in the future.

One area that may be contentious arises from the case management process. Corrective services are justifiably concerned that people who are not transgender may try to access the program for ulterior reasons. In order to minimise the risk of this occurring the case management team is likely to seek information from each self-identified transgender person on their community history. In most cases presentation of documentation such as driver's licence etc. would be enough to prove that an individual is genuine. However, the situation may be more difficult in the case of someone who is in the process of transition and is not yet living in their new gender role and has not effected a name change. In these cases the case management team may seek written permission from the individual to establish a community history. For example evidence in support of a person's claim may be that they have attended the Gender Centre for counselling or are attending a psychiatrist. Cases where there is no community history will be scrutinised carefully.

To our knowledge this policy is a world first and N.S.W. continues to lead the way in addressing the issues that face transgender people. We have a vast array of key people from the non-transgender community supporting our push for social justice and I am confident that we can look forward to an increasingly brighter future for the transgender community.

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# The Real Man

## Who or What Exactly is the Real Man?

by Peter Baker

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John Wayne

**W**ho or what exactly is the real man? What are the images and ideas in our head that tell us how we, and other men, should be? At first sight, the answer might seem obvious yet, as with many definitions, it can prove more elusive on more detailed examination.

***Mike Tyson doesn't break down and cry when he's knocked out an opponent and neither does John Major after he's half-destroyed the U.K. economy.***

Would we qualify as a "real" man if we had bulging biceps like Sylvester Stallone or Chuck Norris? modelling ourselves on mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent probably wouldn't push us very far up the "real" man league table, but what about Superman? Not only does he have phenomenal physical power but he also, after all, believes in truth and justice and always wears his underpants on the outside.

Would becoming a political leader like Bill Clinton make us a "real" man because of the massive political and military power at our fingertips or would we be fatally compromised if, like him, we had a powerful wife? Could we claim "real" man status if we possessed the massive intellect of scientist and writer Professor Stephen Hawking or would being severely disabled rule us out? And what if we were the next Rudolf Nureyev? How would our superb

physique and athleticism balance against the fact that we were not just a dancer but a ballet dancer?

Perhaps the core characteristic of the "real" man is that he's in control. When Rambo decides he's going to rescue American prisoners in Vietnam, he doesn't faff around asking permission or filling in paperwork. And he certainly doesn't let the massed ranks of the Vietnamese army stop him either. Through his physical strength and aggression, he gets the job done. A man like Mike Tyson does much the same in the boxing ring: big, muscular and intimidating, he can flatten most of those who dare step inside the ropes to challenge him.

But physical strength is not the only means of exercising power. Virgin tycoon Richard Branson's financial strength pushes him towards the top of the "real" man super league.

Despite his hippy-like appearance, through his business empire he can virtually hire and fire at will, extending his power over the lives of thousands. And even though Prime Minister John Major may be more of a wimp than Margaret Thatcher, imagine how much more feeble he'd seem if he wasn't the most powerful political figure in the U.K.

As well as having control over others, "real" men must also control themselves. Mike Tyson doesn't break down and cry when he's knocked out an opponent and neither does John Major after he's half-destroyed the U.K. economy. A "real" man must keep a tight rein on his feelings, pretending to the world (as well as himself) that he's on top of everything. He thinks logically and rationally and doesn't get carried away with his emotions. More expressive men like Woody Allen are seen as wimp-like because they're more ready to reveal their fears, anxieties and sense of inadequacy.

To be in charge, a man also has to be active. Clearly, this involves more than sitting around thinking. That's why a man like Stephen Hawking can be recognised as a genius but still fail to make the grade as a "real" man. Just compare him to John Wayne on his ranch. Every day, Wayne's out looking after his cattle and, when someone tries to steal them, he goes searching for the cattle rustlers as well. He doesn't sit back in his rocking chair and ask his wife to do it. A "real" man always has to be ready to act. If he sees a car over-heating on the hard shoulder, he's ready with the monkey wrench to help out the damsel in distress. And even if he doesn't know how to fix cars, as long as he can just bang the bonnet he can save face. It doesn't matter too much what he does, so long as he's doing something.

What's more, if a man wants to be in control, he must be independent. He shouldn't be living at home with his parents when he's forty nor can he be tied down by his wife and 2.4 kids in a little house in the suburbs. The "real" man is free and easy, with no strings

attached. He sleeps under the stars at night and roams the motorways by day. Nobody tells him what to do - no boss, no dependants, no government. In his spaghetti westerns, Clint Eastwood was the ultimate symbol of male independence - he was so free, he had neither a past nor even a name.

Being dominant also means that a "real" man has the capacity to protect others. In fact, it's almost his duty to do so. Take the story of *The Magnificent Seven*. At first, Yul Brynner and his gang of gunfighters simply hoped to make some money by protecting a Mexican community from marauding bandits. But they ended up providing their services for free when they witnessed the terrible suffering of the peasants. No "real" man could let those around him, particularly his own family, be exploited or destroyed. Instead, he uses his physical strength or, in some cases his financial power, to protect the weak and the defenceless.

He can do all that because he's also fearless. The "real" man isn't afraid of working on a building site without a hard hat, walking through the park late at night or pushing his heart to the limit with beer, cigarettes and junk food. When it comes to fighting for his country, he doesn't turn and run; instead, he grits his teeth and marches straight into the hail of fire. In *Terminator 2*, you don't see Arnold Schwarzenegger shaking in his boots when the "baddy" comes after him. Of course, that's probably because he's an android, but when it comes to fear, it sometimes seems as if all men are supposed to behave more like machines than human beings.

And, finally, the "real" man is always on top when it comes to sex. He's a great lover. That's why Richard Gere is envied by so many other men. There's no doubting his great sexual power over women: not only has he been seen giving women shuddering orgasms in almost all his films, but he's also considered desirable by millions of women across the world and ended up marrying one of the most beautiful (even if it didn't work out). It seems anyone aspiring to be a "real" man must have women falling at his feet. A gigantic penis, never-ending orgasms and a thrust rate that would put a pneumatic drill to shame also help.

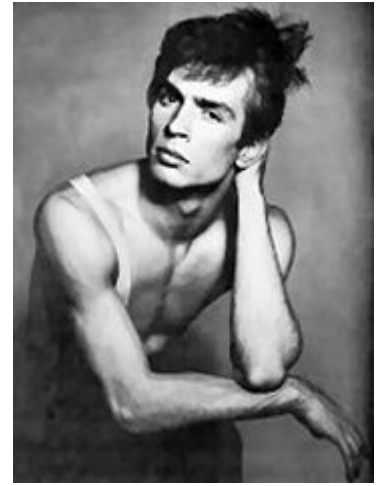
But - and this is a very big but - sleeping around only earns you points as a "real" man if the people you're having sex with are women. If you're gay, you can expect to be refused membership of the "real" men's club, no matter what your other talents. "Real" men wouldn't dream of spending a night with another man or even touching him, unless it was to deliver a fatal karate chop to his neck. It's certainly hard to imagine a James Bond film ending with him snuggling beneath the duvet with weapons' boffin "Q" rather than Pussy Galore, Honey Ryder or any of the other "Bond girls".

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**Rudolf Nureyev**



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# Damages Awarded after Transsexual Woman's Death

## Payout to Mother of Victim of Bigoted Emergency Workers' Negligence

by Sarah D. Fox, PhD., Q.U.I.L.L., Washington D.C. 12th December, 1998

Article appeared in Polare magazine: January 1999 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



The E.M.T.s ridiculed the still-conscious Ms. Hunter, allowing her to bleed profusely on the pavement while horrified onlookers begged them to render aid.

**O**n 7th August 1995, Tyra Hunter, a pre-operative transsexual woman and highly successful hair stylist, was critically wounded in an automobile accident when a motorist ran a stop sign and broadsided her car. Finding today that she died in part because of negligence by the D.C. Fire Department and malpractice by the D.C. General Hospital, a jury awarded \$2.8 million in damages to Margie Hunter, Tyra's mother.

*... at the 1995 accident scene, they discovered her male genitalia. One of them exclaimed. "This ain't no bitch. It's a nigger. He's got a [phallus] and balls." Treatment was immediately discontinued.*

When three D.C. Fire Department E.M.T.s, including Adrian Williams, removed Ms. Hunter's slacks to assess her bleeding at the 1995 accident scene, they discovered her male genitalia. One of them exclaimed. "This ain't no bitch. It's a nigger. He's got a [phallus] and balls." Treatment was immediately discontinued. The E.M.T.s ridiculed the still-conscious Ms. Hunter, allowing her to bleed profusely on the pavement while horrified onlookers begged them to render aid. Treatment was resumed only after Fire Chief Otis Latin arrived at the scene.

Still conscious upon her arrival at D.C. General Hospital, Ms. Hunter was given a medication to paralyse her. She died about an hour later from blood loss. According to expert testimony, Ms. Hunter would have experienced "sheer terror" from feelings of intense suffocation. That, combined with drug-induced paralysis and the probable memory of the

E.M.T.s hateful remarks, paints a macabre picture of Ms. Hunter's final moments.

A deposition by attending physician Joseph Bastian states that while Ms. Hunter lay dying in the E.R., the E.M.T.s continued ridiculing her in a nearby visiting area. They became so disruptive that the hospital staff reported them to the police.

The jury attributed Ms. Hunter's death in part to the E.M.T.s' refusal to administer critical first-response aid and in part to the malpractice of Dr. Bastian. According to expert testimony, Ms. Hunter would have had a 71 to 88 percent chance of survival with prompt, competent attention.

The trial was riddled with unlikely testimony and missing evidence: E.M.T. Adrian Williams testified he assumed Ms. Hunter was a man as he approached her and rendered aid, failing to notice that she had breasts, make-up, women's clothing, a woman's hairstyle, and white nail polish. One subpoenaed D.C. General employee disappeared to Africa until late December. Important patient records were physically altered. Blood gas results and x-ray films were all lost.

Ms. Hunter's treatment has so incensed the American transgender population that activists have discussed it prominently when lobbying the U.S. Congress for hate crimes protection. Tyra's story is surprisingly commonplace and speaks to the fears of most transsexuals, who sometimes feel pressured to undergo expensive sexual reassignment surgery and to alter their legal documents specifically to avoid such nightmares.

It is disappointing that criminal action was not taken and that the offending E.M.T.s were neither disciplined nor reprimanded, despite widespread complaint from Washington citizens. Still, the victory today is a milestone. Today a jury ruled that a transgendered person's life is worth protecting. Today the transgendered population became a bit more human in the eyes of the public.

In the words of transgender activist Jessica Xavier, "I think they came to see Tyra as an ordinary human being, just trying to make her life work, when it was taken from her by the proven negligence of city health care professionals whose duty it was to treat her. This is a victory for transpeople everywhere."

### Tyra Hunter

From Wikipedia;  Tyra Hunter (1970 – 1995) was an African-American pre-operative transsexual woman

who died after being injured as a passenger in a car accident and being refused emergency medical care. Emergency medical technicians at the scene of the accident uttered derogatory epithets and withdrew medical care after discovering that she had male genitalia, and E.R. staff at D.C. General Hospital subsequently provided dilatory and inadequate care.



On December 11, 1998, a jury awarded Hunter's mother, Margie, \$2.9 million after finding the District of Columbia, through its employees in the D.C. Fire Department and doctors at D.C. General, liable under the D.C. Human Rights Act and for negligence and medical malpractice for causing Tyra's death. While \$600,000 of the amount was awarded for damages attributable to violations of the D.C. Human Rights Act associated with the withdrawal of medical care at the accident scene and openly denigrating Tyra with epithets, a further \$1.5 million was awarded to her mother for Tyra's conscious pain and suffering and for economic loss from the wrongful death medical malpractice claim. Doctors at D.C. General failed to diagnose and treat Tyra who died of internal bleeding in the hospital emergency room. Evidence at the trial demonstrated that had Tyra been provided with a blood transfusion and referred to a surgeon, she would have had a 90 percent chance of surviving. The case against the District of Columbia was tried by Richard F. Silber. Dana Priesing, an observer at the trial, wrote that the evidence supported "the inference that a stereotype (namely that Tyra was an anonymous, drug using, transgender street person) affected the treatment Tyra received", and that the "E.R. staff, as evidenced by their actions, did not consider her life worth saving".

Tyra had transitioned at the age of 14 and lived entirely as a woman. Over 2,000 people attended her funeral. T.Y.R.A. (Transgender Youth Resources and Advocacy), a program of the Illinois Gender Advocates and Howard Brown Health Centre, is a Chicago area transgender youth initiative named in her memory.

## Further Information

[G.L.A.A. Victory in Tyra Hunter Case](#) 

[Metro Weekly: A Life Remembered](#) 

[Tyra Hunter Medical Transphobia Death 15th Anniversary](#) 

[TransGriot: Tyra Hunter Anniversary](#) 

[Advocate.com: Injustice at Every Turn](#) 

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## Transgender Debate: Against Exclusion

Reprinted with permission from *Green Left Weekly*, by Emma Murphy & Sahar Lantz  
Article appeared in Polare magazine: January 1999 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Left Alliance members have gone so far as to say that transgender women are not "real" women. The problem with this argument is that it relies on a biological definition of women.

**M**elbourne - There has been widespread opposition to a decision to exclude transgender women from the Network of Women Students Australia (N.O.W.S.A.) collective. This opposition has come from numerous alternative newspapers, including *Melbourne Star Observer*, campus women's collectives, e-mail networks and queer collectives.

*transgender women are oppressed by the same systemic structures and ideologies that all women are oppressed by ...*

Contributors to these forums have criticised the N.O.W.S.A. collective's decision, and in particular the Left Alliance members who argued for it, as biologically determinist, inward looking and exclusionary.

The alternative positions all insist that women's oppression is social, and that therefore anyone who suffers that oppression should be included in feminist organising.

The N.O.W.S.A. decision has had ramifications in the women's liberation movement around the country, setting the precedent for transgender women to be excluded from the "Reclaim the Night Collective" in Perth, and has brought discussion around the issue into numerous campus women's departments.

The exclusionary arguments are epitomised in an article by Jessica Whyte, a Left Alliance member, in the women's collective edition of *Catalyst*, the R.M.I.T. student newspaper. Whyte's article uses separatist and biological determinist arguments to discredit the struggle that many transgender women face - to be recognised as who they are, rather than being attacked and rejected.

Whyte states: "... a person who had spent all their life as a man could not possibly be entirely free of patriarchal conditioning". But that says nothing about their experience as women in a sexist society.

### Social Categories

Left Alliance members have gone so far as to say that transgender women are not "real" women. The problem with this argument is that it relies on a biological definition of women.

We live in a society that categorises people into rigid and often oppressive social and sexual stereotypes.

From the moment we are born we are taught - implicitly and explicitly - that there are two genders based on biological sex, male and female, and that each gender carries with it an appropriate behaviour. Those born with female sexual organs are women and therefore "feminine", and vice versa for those born with male sexual organs.

Society not only dictates that people conform to these gender roles, but that we treat the roles as self-evidently "natural".

The women's movement should recognise the oppressive nature of this gender stereotyping. It defines women primarily as mothers, wives, child-carers, launderers, cooks.

Feminists need to challenge this. We need to recognise that gender is socially constructed. Any social construction which tries to dictate even the most personal and individual aspects of our lives (i.e. how we identify ourselves) is something which we need to fight.

The biological determinist arguments put forward by members of Left Alliance give credence to the hierarchy theory of oppressions: that "women born women" are more oppressed than transgendered women. Thus only those "more" oppressed (or perhaps "really oppressed" should be allowed in women's campaigns and spaces.

### Politics

This logic leads to exclusion: the idea that only the most oppressed can genuinely speak, participate, organise and make decisions.

Politics is leached from this argument. It ignores that fact that commitment to feminism is not in our genes.

Being born a woman does not guarantee support for women's liberation. In fact, many women believe that existing gender relations are not oppressive to women, but rather "natural".

In the arguments of the N.O.W.S.A. collective, the political positions and consciousness of women are not considered important. In reality, both are the building blocks of any political movement, but the Left Alliance argument allows all "women born women", irrespective of their politics to participate.

Meanwhile, transgender women, many of whom politically support the aims of the women's movement, recognise that existing gender relations are oppressive and those who experience oppression both as women and transgendered women, are excluded.

Biological determinism is deeply fatalistic. It means that women's liberation will always be unattainable while men exist.

Arguing that specific social conditioning is fixed and hence, unchangeable, faces exactly the same problem. If this were the case, how do we explain the women who are socialised by the dominant ideologies of society, yet develop a feminist consciousness?

How, in fact, do we achieve any sort of liberation at all if we can't change people's consciousness?

Another argument for exclusion is that transgender women have led a life of "male privilege". This denies the fact that many transgender people realised from an early age that they do not fit the gender role dictated to them by society.

They suffer oppression as transgender people - being forced to conform to stereotypes that contradict their identity - and the minute they identify as a woman, they take on the oppression that all women face, issues of body image, sexual harassment, and unequal wages and so on.

### **Individualising oppression**

Left Alliance members arguing for exclusion claim that a "man" choosing to have a gender reassignment is legitimising the gender roles constructed by society. Whyte writes " ... this same man could help break down notions of sex-determined gender by refusing to behave in a way which society views as acceptably masculine".

This completely individualises transgenderism, blaming the victims of oppressive gender stereotyping rather than the system which creates it. Why should it be up to individuals to "break down notions of gender" to the extent that they live a life of persecution and depression due to being trapped in the wrong body?

The argument also implies that there is a great degree of choice involved, when transgender people are often aware of their true identity from a young age, and merely seek to change their body or their appearance to fit who they are.

Undergoing gender reassignment is not a political act: it's a personal decision to assert one's identity. Politics comes into it when a woman (transgender or otherwise) becomes aware of women's oppression and decides to get active in feminist organising.

### **Woman-only space**

This brings us to the question of whether transgender women should be allowed in women-only space is to provide women with a place in which "... they will feel free from the intimidation or discomfort they may feel around men. If women do not feel comfortable in the presence of a male-to-female transsexual then the point of women's only space is nullified".

This reduces women's rooms, something women have fought so hard for, to a comfortable social space. In fact, women's rooms are politically useful only when they are used for feminist organising - a place where women can come together to organise for liberation without the barriers many find to their ability to speak out.

Women-only organising space cannot be reduced to somewhere we can go to feel "comfortable" Indeed, if we are going to address entrance criteria, let's call them "feminist rooms" and only welcome those who identify as women and want to work to build the women's liberation movement.

The crucial point is this: transgender women are oppressed by the same systemic structures and ideologies that all women are oppressed by - from sexual harassment and unequal wages through to gender stereotyping and physical abuse.

It is logical that all those who suffer from the same oppression should organise together - the self-organisation of the oppressed. By excluding transgender women from feminist organising, however, we are not allowing this to happen, but are acting in collusion with the sexist system by policing its oppressive gender boundaries.

### **Attempted censorship**

Since the initial decision by the N.O.W.S.A. collective, and the resulting criticisms, the same Left Alliance members have attempted to censor discussion. They put a motion (leading up to "FemX", the National Union of Students' women's policy conference) to stop collective members from expressing their opposition to the exclusion of transgender women.

The N.O.W.S.A. collective has expressed opposition to the ongoing debate in many forums, including the *Green Left Weekly*.

Democratic Socialist Party members were criticised for "going to the media". This, according to the collective, "shows no respect for the decisions of the N.O.W.S.A. collective".

The opposite is true: it is essential that this debate be ongoing and widespread. It is a question of how to build a strong women's



movement - a crucial issue for all who seek to fight against injustice.

Such issues cannot be confined within one group. This is an issue that affects all women.

Serious feminist organising is based on making political discussions public; forging alliances between organising collectives; strengthening the movement and raising the level of consciousness and understanding of the issues.

In the face of increasing attacks on women's rights, women's organising cannot afford to be atomised. With energy and urgency, our aim is to build the biggest movements and committees to combat all oppression, rather than to divide the oppressed by the policies of exclusion and personal politics.

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## Made in Thailand

### Shirley Fulfils Her Life's Dream

by Shirley Hogue

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Dr. Sanguan Kunaporn

All bookings okay, passport sorted out, Bank Draft and Travellers Cheques, Credit Card for emergencies. Now where is the Valium<sup>®</sup>, gonna need that ... not the fear of Surgery in an unknown land, but an absolute fear of flying in an aircraft that is bigger than a four storey block of flats. Hmmm, there is no way that 200 tonnes can fly, but it's too late for alternatives. S.R.S. is scheduled for 10th December and it's now the 8th. Wow that went so fast.

*... [Dr. Sanguan] immediately calmed every trembling bone in my body. I think, for the first time I was really certain that I had made the right decision to come to Thailand.*

Great, seat 42C, right next to the loo, that is considerate, seat belt kinda tight, but that's okay, I can handle that too. Oh Shit, we are moving, and backwards. As I look out of the porthole I can see the terminal disappearing and we are setting up for take off, or a least that's what the pilot is talking about. Shit I hope he is right, but I'm sure that he's done it before, or maybe the apprentice is gonna fly the thing.

These are the things that make the thought of facing Sex Reassignment Surgery rather insignificant to a novice air traveller, but if you are used to flying, you better try and find your

own solution. Good luck!

An overnight stopover in Bangkok, and a one hour domestic flight we disembark in Phuket. The first thing that you notice is the heat and humidity, quite heavy after the climate of Australia.

After collecting my baggage and clearing Customs I was met by a sweet little guy in a pair of neatly pressed pants, and a shirt that was as white as his smile, holding a sign with my name printed on it. He immediately took all my baggage and led me to an awaiting limo that he was driving. Kidding that didn't piss the taxi drivers off at the airport.

Anyway, this was my first encounter with Dr. Sanguan Kunaporn's driver. He couldn't speak much English, but he was doing better than my Thai, so between all of it we managed to formulate a crude sort of communication.

I spent the first night in the Royal Phuket City Hotel where I was contacted by Dr. Sanguan, himself, to arrange for my admission to hospital in the morning.

At 10:00am I was once again chauffeured to the hospital, through the tiny winding streets of a city that had a Dutch and French influence, but hadn't seen a coat of paint since the 1950s, however the whole place had a charm of its own, that would ultimately change all of my ideas of Asian life and culture. After arriving at the Phuket International Hospital, I was treated to tea, and then comfortably seated in the lounge area, where I finally met the man that was about to be the facilitator of what had been a life's dream.

I was totally stunned by this man, and his nature. He was more than I had expected from the photographs at I had seen on the Internet, with a demeanour that immediately calmed every trembling bone in my body. I think, for the first time I was really certain that I had made the right decision to come to Thailand. His physical examination was quite extensive, but he seemed to be making sure that there were no unseen factors that would create any problems during the surgical procedure.

After all of this, a wheelchair was summoned and I was taken to the room that would be my home for the next six days. "Room" was an understatement. It was a suite, with neat furnishings, an ensuite, refrigerator that was fully stocked with drinks and bottled water, and a balcony that overlooked the largest fish pond that I had ever seen, where I would feed the coy carp and catfish after my surgery. It had colour cable television and air conditioning that I could regulate to my comfort level, quite unlike the standard no frills systems that our Aussie hospitals have. The service that I was receiving was nothing short of five star. I really felt like royalty.

The next day I was prepped and taken to theatre, and surprisingly enough I had no fear. The nerves had disappeared and I found myself in an atmosphere that was totally calm, and without any drugs to induce this feeling of euphoria. A cannula was placed in my hand and a drip was inserted to facilitate the happy juice that would soon send me off with the fairies, (no pun intended). All I can remember was saying, "nightie night" then it was "zzzz".

I vaguely remember the surgical team waking me, as had been the procedure during previous operations, but I must have fallen asleep again, waking later in the I.C.U., to a full meal of sandwiches, and orange juice. I couldn't focus on it at all, and dropped more than I managed to get into the hole that I was sure was a mouth, but then again, it may have been my ear. Who knows. In any case I wore the meal in the true fashion that was expected.

After about four hours, I began to regain my eyesight and all of the rest of the feelings in my body. The epidural was almost worn off, and I could feel everything that was usual to me prior to the surgery. That's when I had to check if the operation had been done, cause the feelings were all still where I left 'em, but yep, it was gone, and a large surgical dressing and a catheter was draining out of the centre.

After a day or so, in I.C.U., I was returned to my suite, where an enormous, beautiful basket of flowers dominated the scene. It was from Dr. Sanguan and his staff at the hospital. He had even brought his own personal V.C.R. and tape collection in so that I would not be bored. It was really amazing. Can you imagine that sort of service and care to detail in a Sydney Hospital, I certainly can't.

For the next six days, I would settle in and have all of my needs catered for before I could even think of them. For the first time in my entire life, I actually enjoyed a bed bath that was conducted each morning by the nursing staff.

There was no room for modesty, and for the first time, I felt that I was no longer ugly, as the thing that plagued my life had been removed, along with the inhibitions that had always caused me to cover myself whenever I was naked. It was the best feeling of all to be totally without anything that linked me to the physical male gender. It was sort of like a warm cosy feeling of contentment and security, rather than the overwhelming elation that I expected.

The only pain that I was experiencing, was caused by the catheter, which I had developed an allergy to, but that soon subsided after its removal. The epidural stem, although empty, was left in place in the event that further surgery was required after the dressings were removed, but all was okay and that was also removed, to allow me more comfort.

Although the surgery created minimal pain, I was given analgesics twice a day, and sleeping pills each night, to ease the discomfort from the arthritis in my back, which was agitated by the fact that I had been face up on a rubber mattress for almost a week.

A little bit of info if you are not given a mattress overlay, ask for one. It will allow you to sleep at night. Finally the dressings were to be removed completely, and I was watching Dr. Sanguan's face for a sign of the result. He smiled, and all of my fears were gone.

A mirror was given to me, and my first look at the creation between my legs was now visible. Shit was it swollen, but the bruising was minimal, all of the features were pointed out and I could imagine how it would appear after the swelling had subsided. Wow! What a feeling! (and that had nothing to do with a Toyota.)

On the 6th day, I was released from hospital, to return to my hotel for rest and convalescence, but had to be brought back to the hospital four days later for examinations and a photo session. Still all okay, but the camera had a flat battery. That was rectified at a later date, and the recorded evidence of a fantastic job was now in his archives.

I was taught how to dilate, and how to maintain and clean, what was commonly referred to as "the wound", but that was okay as well. After this I was returned to my hotel for the duration of my stay and to await my flight home. Nine days in all, but it gave me the time that I needed to check out the local customs and experience the cuisine that was on offer. It was truly an experience that I could recommend, and my new understanding of Thai culture was to be a refreshing wind that blew all of the prejudice and misgivings that had haunted me throughout the years of my adult life. It was a bonus that destiny had provided for me to enhance an experience that I will never forget.

My flight was on the 24th, with an interconnecting International 747 waiting at Bangkok as I arrived. I think that either the hospital or Dr. Sanguan had arranged for special treatment for me on the return journey, as I was allocated an entire row of seats with heaps of pillows, in an aircraft that was obviously fully booked. I have no real way of knowing whether this was the case, but if it was, then the man has some real clout, and it made the flight back to Sydney as comfortable as it could possibly be. I could actually lay down and sleep, which I did to make the eight hours between Thailand and Sydney seem like a breeze.

I was woken at 4:00am Sydney time for breakfast, and watched my homeland unfold below from an altitude of 37,000 feet, and the sight of Sydney appearing on the horizon was an experience of its own. Touchdown on the north-south runway, all the brakes on and the engines of the 747 in reverse thrust. Jeez, them things can really stop quick.

After the normal customs crap and the long walk to the barrier control of the terminal, I was greeted by my partner, Chris, and two of my closest friends, Ang and Lydia, who had travelled all the way to Sydney so that I would not have to get a train home. Then the tears started, and I guess that we made one hell of a scene, but what the heck, it was Christmas day, and it was the best Christmas that I had ever had.

Give it a try if you like. I don't think that you will ever regret it, if it turns out as wonderful as my own experience of being "Made in Thailand" I may get it tattooed just above the hairline, Ya never know.

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# Identity

## And The Much Needed, Keenly Awaited Hormonal Changes

by Michael

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Sometimes I get confirmation from other people that I'm changing ... but I still don't see the man I want to project.

I've just completed a course on research design in qualitative inquiry. My proposed research title has the word 'transgendered' in it, and I felt I had to explain my interest in researching transgendered people. So whilst this academic study was pursued over five days, there was a hidden agenda for me, namely my identity.

***Yes, I'm sucked into to the gender dichotomy. I want to be seen as a man and I want to score as a man.***

I identify as a man but the mirror doesn't support this. I still don't see the man I want to project. I still see the past woman. Sometimes I get confirmation from other people that I'm changing. The other day I went to a dykes wedding/commitment ceremony. Dyke and straight friends who haven't seen me for months, saw a difference. One woman was ignorant of my name change, etc. and she hadn't seen me for over a year. She thought that I looked different and she liked my shorter haircut. So I got mainly positive feedback from those who knew me before though one dyke couple whom I'd never met, weren't quite sure. The name 'Michael' is an 'in-ya-face' name as there's no mistaking its masculinity, whereas Mick' is a nickname and possibly androgynous.

I knew on an intellectual level that a bilateral mastectomy would not radically change people's perception of me, i.e. I don't pass 100 percent. I had hoped a change of upper body shape would help but no, and those who were introduced to me as a woman in the

past, or saw me as a woman without being told otherwise, still see a woman today. The face needs facial hair, but it may not happen as much as I would like, and that is a full beard. My body shape sucks! Too big around the lower torso. I need to dress to minimise the effect and not to be waiting for other clues to say, "that's a man". It's my projection onto other people that is the problem too, but how to overcome this, and do I want to?

Yes, I'm sucked into to the gender dichotomy. I want to be seen as a man and I want to score as a man. At this wedding, there were a few single straight women but I only talked to them. Two of them were big women and my altruistic-self said "no, leave them alone, don't get involved, you're not serious about commitment, you only want them because you think you'll have a chance with them, what about your imperfect body, but they may be grateful for the attention", etc. So maybe I'll be a 'john' again and engage a sex worker and experiment without worrying about involvement, because all I want is sex. However, the delicious foreplay and wooing of a woman has not lost its charm and there is no particular type that I think I'm attracted to.

One woman on my course interested me, but married and from overseas! I caught her looking at my bulge during lunchtime on the first day after I'd outed myself and it wasn't until we were both walking away from the course that I was able to talk to her and get a little closer. Again she was a big breasted woman whom I thought could do with a breast reduction as her breathing was laboured during her presentation on the last day. A real earth mother, interested in earthy things, someone to come home to after a long day's (or night's) work and be comforted in those breasts. I like their softness, the creamy skin.

I've still got that soft skin on the sides of my new chest. I wasn't really aware of it because it was hidden. I feel it needs roughing up and a dose of the sun would give it some colour. I've never gone topless but I don't feel ready to bare all this summer at the beach as the surgeon has left too much tissue for me to feel comfortable exposing myself. He's going to liposuction the excess tissue next February. (This excess was left so that the nerve endings to the nipples could recover). It all comes down to aesthetics and how I feel about myself. If I present or project an image, an illusion, then that is what other people will see.

If I exude confidence in my manhood, even if I don't always feel it, then I will be more confident in myself, and other people will then feel comfortable with what I'm presenting. I have to accept that some people will often see my past whilst others will only see whom I'm presenting now. I create the illusion; I recreate myself so that other people can see what I feel I am. I feel that I'm a man. I look at other men and see how they do things and this helps me to create a better illusion. It's not a lie, trying to pass, but some people feel cheated if they are sexually attracted to a person who is not chromosomally or otherwise correct according to their perceived love map.



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# Why We Lie

## And We Lie to the Most Important People in Our Lives

by Janet Elizabeth Fletcher

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**B**efore reading this essay, I want you to know I went places that I have never went before in my gritting about my personal history. What I have to share is very direct and very strong. These are truths as I see them. This is the story and the lessons learned from my personal journey. I ask that you accept them as such.

*Lying is the single tool that allows a transsexual to reach the point where they can finally take control of their lives.*

Each of us has a unique journey through life. Each of us learns a unique set of lessons. If your journey parallels mine, so be it. And if it does not, such is the will of the Lord. That places neither of our journeys on a higher level. It solely makes them different and separate. I ask that you respect this story, the story of my journey, as it was difficult to tell and share. And there is that in that difficulty which leaves me open and very vulnerable. Yet I believe that this is now the time to tell this part of my story. Thank you.

### Why we lie

And yes, we, transgendered and especially transsexuals, do lie. And we lie to the most important people in our lives. And we lie about extremely important things. And we lie a lot.

Okay, I admitted the un-admittable. I told the bitter-most truth about transsexuals. And I accept that many who read this essay will not like that truth being told.

Now I am going to explain why we lie. I know not everyone will accept this essay as truth, as fact. But then why should you? I mean, I am a transsexual, and I just admitted that I lie. Not only that I lie, but that I am extremely good at lying and extremely experienced at it. I am also going to do something else. I am going to use myself and Mary-Lou as the examples. No one else. This is my story. But I assure you, if you're willing to believe me, that this is one place that all transgendered deep inside will agree. This is something we deeply share.

We lie for many reasons. Some minor, some major. Some easy to understand, some impossible.

The main reason we lie is denial. Transsexuals are the originators of the concept of denial. We are professionals at this. We wrote the book on denial. Denial is a type of lying. An extremely dangerous type. It starts with facts. We know deep inside that we are different. But we do not want to acknowledge that difference. Because to acknowledge that difference is to allow ourselves to be recognised. Perhaps only by ourselves. But still recognised and labelled. No one wants to be labelled transgendered, or transsexual or cross-dresser or transvestite. These words have serious ramifications in society. Negative connotations. Severe connotations. Yet to admit internally that we are a transsexual, we are admitting that society will condemn us, has the right to condemn us.

This goes one step further. Many of us have been taught from a very early age that if we are queer, the proper response is to internalize that queerness, lead a normal life, and pray to God for redemption of our horrible sin of being. I don't care if the queerness is transsexual or homosexual in nature. We were raised and taught that we can mentally make this go away and it is our moral duty to do so.

For those of us born in the 1940s, '50s or '60s, can you imagine being encouraged to admit that you were either homosexual or transgendered by your parents? I know that if I had told my parents, when at the age of fourteen I knew I was transsexual, that I was transsexual ... Well that was 1966, my parents were second generation Polish Catholics. I would have been most likely institutionalized, drugged, and possibly treated with severe aversion therapies. None of which would have worked. But that was okay back then, the system was trying. It would have been my fault that the treatments failed to work.

You see, I was taught that if you were different, it was your fault. And that you, and you alone, could correct that fault. You, and you alone were responsible for that fault. I was faulted. I wanted so bad to be a girl. But I was born a boy. And I honestly thought that I was mentally ill. I was terrified of what would have happened if I told anyone. Terrified that anyone would ever find out. So I lied. I lied about who and what I was. I lied about my dreams. I lied about everything. I lied to everyone. Worst of all, I lied to myself.

I lied to myself.

### Truth #1

We lie first to protect ourselves from the reality we know will destroy us.

And that was the worst lie I ever told. But then, what choice did I have? Remember, this is 1966, I am fourteen, small, mid-American rural town, semi-educated very Catholic, very ethnic parents. I seriously ask you, what choice did I have?

And thus, the denial began. And with the denial, the pattern of lying to cover who and what we are inside. By the way, what did I deny? Simply who and what I knew I was inside. I denied my gender, my feelings, my emotions. I denied my dreams. I denied everything that I could.

You see, I desperately wanted to be normal. And I knew that I was not. And I feared that I would never be.

So, now the pattern is set. Lying and denial are the tools that I will use to live. These are the tools that I was forced to develop so that I could exist the only way I could find to exist. And, if you want another truth, again, if you believe me. Those tools worked.

Somehow I reached adulthood without being caught or killing myself. Because if I hadn't done as I did, I would have surely been caught and institutionalized or committed suicide. That reality is fact, not theory. And that reality was an extremely difficult reality to grow up with.

But I became an adult. I had told some of my feelings to one human being, a girlfriend I had for several years. But only to her. Our relationship ended badly. I attempted suicide, and I failed. I honestly believed then (and still harbour doubts) that our relationship ended because I told her I was a transsexual. Because I tried to share this part of myself with her. I decided that I would never do so again. Nor would I think those thoughts. Nor would I feel those needs and emotions. I was nineteen years of age.

Did it work? Yes and no. I was able to act accordingly for about five or six years. During that time I graduated from college and got married.

Then my denial stopped working. The feelings came back. The needs came back, the emotions came back.

Now, let's look at this more closely. I'm about twenty-five or so. Feelings that I do not want are surfacing. I have a new wife. A wife I believe is very conservative. A wife I love intensely. I still do not really understand what these feelings are, what is causing them. I am still not sure that I am not alone in the world. I am still not sure that I am not mentally ill. I still do not have any resources to learn anything about what I am feeling. I definitely do not understand these feelings. And I honestly believe that these feelings caused a previous relationship, the only person I had ever shared these feelings with, to end.

But I could not make the feelings, needs and emotions go away. And yes I tried. Yes, I prayed. Yes, I did everything I could think of to do, but the feelings simply remained.

Then something happened inside of the marriage that in essence forced me to begin telling the truth. Because at this time, I am using denial and I am lying by default. But I am also convinced that if I did tell, the marriage would end. Mary-Lou developed severe yeast infections due to the birth control pill she was taking. Normal sex was not possible for months at a time. I, as a young man, was extremely over-sexed. I admit that. But I also admit that I did not like it. And that there is nothing an individual can do to lessen sex drive and sexual needs. I began to look for alternatives for sexual release. I am monogamous, always have been and always will be. I never cheated on anyone in my life. So an affair was not even considered. But there was another release. Cross-dressing can and did release the sexual tensions I felt back then.

By this time I was working in a Steel Mill. The significance of this is the literature that was available for late night reading when working the 11:00pm - 7:00am shift. Pornography and gun magazines. After you read all the Gun magazines, you get desperate. You begin grabbing the porn out of desperation. And I discovered Penthouse Letters. And even more amazing, I discovered that people were writing letters about cross-dressing. I discovered, for the first time, that I was not alone. For the next ten years my primary source of information and support came from *Variations* and similar magazines.

And with this knowledge that I was not alone, I began to seek ways to use this knowledge to reduce the sexual tension I was feeling. I know, I should have sought help. But isn't hindsight wonderful? But I didn't. Again, I did what I thought I was supposed to. I solved the problem inside of myself. I internalized the issue and denied major portions of the problem.

So about eighteen months into our relationship, I introduced cross-dressing behaviour into our marriage. Did I tell the truth? I told some of the truth. Again I was denying much of it to myself. And I only told those parts of the truth that I felt could help. Not those parts of the truth I feared. And Mary-Lou, poor conservative rural nurse she was, was introduced to the real world.

Her reaction? She hated it. She hated it with a passion. But she allowed me to do a very limited amount of cross-dressing. Why? Ask Mary-Lou, that's her story, this is mine.

Now the second lie. Lying to our loved ones. I already knew how to lie. I and done that for most of my life by this time. And I was pretty darn good at it. In addition I was terrified that if the truth be known, the results would be disastrous. But this time, I was determined to seek some resemblance of the truth. So for the next five to seven years I pursued the truth. The truth about those emotions, needs and feelings that I could no longer deny having. I told some of the truth to Mary-Lou. I wanted to tell her all of the truth. But based on her reaction to what I did tell her, I was terrified to tell any more.

## Truth #2

We lie to our loved ones because we are terrified of what will happen when they find out. We know that inevitably they will, but we prefer to put that time off as long as we can. And for many, if not most of us, this has been reinforced by previous experiences.

So, at about thirty to thirty-two I finally found the answers I was seeking. Actually one answer. That being, that I was a transsexual. In

essence a woman born in a man's body. (Remember this is from my perspective twelve to fourteen years ago, not now). Now another truth. I did not want to be. I did not want to be a transsexual. I wanted to be normal. I wanted to be like all the rest of the men. I wanted that so desperately. I was terrified that if I told Mary-Lou I was transsexual I would lose her. And with that loss, I would lose that single thing that made my life worth living. Now the really terrible news. I had learned enough that I knew there was no cure for transsexuality. I knew that transsexuals had to change their sex. That there were no other options.

But I had this hope. I hoped that if I could wait long enough, that this need, this intense need would 1) either go away, or 2) a cure would be found. And if I could just live as a man, albeit a man who cross-dressed, I could remain a man. If not forever, then at least I could extend that time Mary-Lou and I had together.

Did I tell any of this to Mary-Lou? Good Lord no. I really am not sure if I vocalized any of this to myself. But just knew the knowledge and acted self-consciously. So again I lied. Again I lied to myself. Again I lied to Mary-Lou. Again I lied to society, to my friends, and to my family. Again, and this is very important, I did what I thought was right. I acted in what I thought was everyone involved's best interests. I did the only thing I knew to do, I used the only tool I knew would work. I simply lied.

Now, the pattern is not only set, it is reinforced. During the next ten years I slowly began to die. I reached the point at some time during this period that I knew I was going to die by suicide. Not if, or how, but when was the question. I was now, not only fighting for my marriage, I was fighting for my very life. I honestly believed that I would kill myself before I admitted to anyone that I was a transsexual. And I knew inside that the need to become one was increasing. That inevitably I had to either face suicide or become a woman. So I lied about that too. Why not? By now, I had forgotten what honesty was.

What reinforced this behaviour was that lying worked. I was still alive, albeit dying, I was still safe, albeit taking ever greater chances with my cross-dressing as the need to cross-dress increased. I was still married, albeit the marriage was floundering. And I honestly did not know what else to do. I had no peers. I had only told anything to Mary-Lou. I had no one else to talk to or with. I had extremely limited sources of very dated material. I was still confused and terrified of the choices. I still knew down deep inside that suicide was inevitable. And I was becoming mentally ill.

### Truth #3

We lie to protect the extremely fragile shell that keeps us alive. Lying is our only defence against what we sense is certain death.

From here, my story has been told many times. I became severely mentally ill, eventually being diagnosed with Severe Chronic Anxiety. I was told my life expectancy from suicide was as low as thirty days at times. Told by my Psychiatrist, once I had stabilized. I learned that salvation could be had only by telling the truth. But I also learned that telling the truth does indeed take it's toll. My parents still will not accept my telling the truth, but rather that I return to living with lies. I have learned that 97 percent of marriages like mine do not survive. That I was correct when I felt that in telling the entire truth, I would almost certainly lose my marriage. I was lucky, I did not.

I have learned that telling the truth takes a tremendous toll of emotional and spiritual energy, a toll I will pay for the rest of my life. But I also learned I could live with that cost. I learned that I could indeed become a woman, and that I could really and totally enjoy life as a woman.

I learned what a horrible cost lying takes on us. I learned how wrong lying is.

But I still have questions. Important questions. Should I have told my parents at the age of fourteen that I wanted desperately to be a girl? Should I have told my friends in high school? In college? In the Steel Mill? Places where acting male was survival not only for myself, but for virtually all men? Should I have told Mary-Lou, when the reality was I really did not understand myself what was happening? Should I have told Mary-Lou before she was ready herself to accept my transition and change? Should I have ended the lies before I was ready to end those lies?

Hindsight is far better than foresight. And like many, I lack foresight altogether. But on hindsight? There I'm pretty darn good. Want to know something? What I did worked. Was there another way to reach this place? I honestly do not know.

Lying is a very powerful tool. Tools have dual natures. They can aid us, or they can hurt us. Think of fire, it cooks our food, it warms our homes. Yet fire can destroy, burn and even kill. Should we ban fire because it can kill? Because it will kill? Or learn to accept fire as a tool we need to survive?

### Truth #4

Lying is the single tool that allows a transsexual to reach the point where they can finally take control of their lives. But along the way, they will inevitably hurt others with those same lies that have saved their lives. And this is perhaps the most horrible truth about transsexuality.

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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.