

# Polare Edition 54

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## Editorial

by Katherine Cummings, Polare Editor

**Y**et another period of confusion, disorientation and disorganisation for your beloved editor moved house at the end of September, with all the hassle and chaos that this implies, ranging from a removalist who couldn't fit everything into his van so that Chester and I spent a night sleeping on carpet in a virtually empty house, to a daisy-chain transaction where someone at the far end of the chain failed to raise his money, and everyone else down the line found their transactions jeopardised.

None of which would matter from your or *Polare's* point of view (apart from the delays to publishing inherent in the time taken to organise a sale, a purchase and a house move) had it not been for the unavailability of my files and my computer during, and after, the move. We finished up in our new house surrounded by boxes and furniture in an arrangement similar to those designed to study maze-learning in rats (Psychology I, 1952).

Matters were not helped by my falling over and breaking my right wrist in the midst of settling in. I am still in a cast [editors note ... it finally came off on 12th October] and keyboarding very slowly like someone practicing the motto of the Fleet Air Arm (Search and Strike) so I hope you will forgive me if there are even more typos than usual.

I have decided that this issue will not be October-November but October-December, giving me a little breathing space after this issue comes out. I have wanted for some time to bring *Polare* into line with the calendar year, rather than having an issue which straddles December-January. Now seems like a good time to do it.

Our cover this issue features Roberta Perkins, who was largely responsible for the creation of the Gender Centre and who pointed out at the A.G.M. that this momentous event (and I am not being ironic) took place 20 years ago! The Gender Centre has passed through good times and bad, name changes, external crises and internal conflict but has survived and is still the only government-funded service for the gender variant in Australia. My congratulations to Roberta and to the many workers in the Centre who have achieved the viable and useful organisation we know today.

To pretend that everyone loves us would be naive but the people who have been helped far outnumber those who feel they have not and I, for one, hope that the Gender Centre continues to supply care and service to the transgendered until we outlive our usefulness because the concept of gender variance is accepted as simply another characteristic of the human condition, like eye colour, height or ethnic origin.

Elizabeth-Anne has returned from Belgium, revived by her attendance at the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association Biennial Symposium and her

## Feature Articles



... after a brief period of not knowing whether she was Arthur or Martha, had decided on "Martha" and soon after school finished had the gender-altering operation.

### A Class Act On And Off The Field

The banks of St Joseph's College main oval last Sunday, Joey's class of '83 gathered for a barbecue to celebrate the end of their 20-year reunion weekend. Why not play a game of footy? So they did. The only odd thing was the attractive woman who scored the first try.

### The Bottom Line

Whether we're straight, bent, queer, trannie or whatever, we all live in a social world of human relations and activities. We all interact with others on a daily basis, and so the attitude we take in doing so is going to affect those interactions and our quality of life.

### Louise

The summer I spent with Louise. The days, hot and fierce, reeling, like a slap in the face; gasping, like the wind knocked out of you. Hot as corrugated iron; dry as drought. The long twilights, lingering and languorous, cooled by the soft sea breeze from over Coogee beach.

### Tales of Tiresias

In October 1983 the doors opened at 75 Morgan St., Petersham, Tiresias House with its twelve bed spaces was filled immediately with young trannies traumatised by being cast out of their parental homes or drifting around the Cross searching for identity roots.

### What Are You? Male, Female, or Neither of the Above?

If voluntary change is tough it's still a piece of cake compared with what is suffered by the true heroes of change in society: trans people, whose physical bodies are at odds with their inner sense of gender. Pamela Stephenson suggests abolishing the binary system.

### Finding The Real Me

overview of the symposium appears on page 26. Her own paper will be featured in *Polare* 55.

On the home front, Elizabeth Riley, the Gender Centre General Manager, was honoured at the Diva Awards, receiving a Diva for Outstanding Service to our Community. A well-deserved recognition of her unflagging work for all those who are disadvantaged by reason of being transgendered. Our congratulations!

Jenny Lovelace drew my attention to a piece in the British *Daily Telegraph* by Pamela Stephenson, the comedienne and psychologist. I have reprinted it on page 23. It seems that Ms. Stephenson is trying to be nice to transgenders but she goes about it in a peculiar way, suggesting that transgenders are likely to be "the fully-bloused matron with a five-o'clock shadow, the tomboyish teenager with flattened C-cups, the gravel voiced coquette in the size 12 heels". She seems to suggest that trans genders are obvious and we should tolerate them. She even says that some people need to be given a washroom marked "Just Different". Oh, my yes, that is sure to make them feel comfortable in a binary society. I suppose it is better than the mean spirited attacks launched by Germaine Greer. But why Stephenson thinks a purple beard is incongruous on her husband baffles me. Purpling his beard is one of the least incongruous acts of the delightful Billy Connolly.

Laura Seabrook (page 6) contributes her strategies for dealing with intrusive strangers, strategies kinder than stamping on their insteps or spraying them with mace, but only marginally. Remind me never to upset Laura.

And there is creative writing from Paula Kaye, who displays a sure touch when she describes the bittersweet moment of loving renunciation which occurs in the lives of so many transgenders as the circumstances of their convoluted lives force them to renounce a loved and loving partner.

## Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

### Re: Kevin

The 2002 - 2003 year has yet again seen some major progress and achievements for the transgender community. Of major significance was the successful outcome in the Re: Kevin case which involved the legal dispute with the Federal Attorney General to have the marriage between Kevin, a female-to-male transsexual, and his partner Jennifer to have their marriage declared valid. The Family Court originally heard the case and Justice Richard Chisholm found in favour of the applicants. However, the Federal Attorney General appealed the decision and the case was re-heard before the Full Bench of the Family Court. There followed a further protracted legal contest with the Full Bench taking a further eighteen months before they handed down their decision. That decision was finally handed down in February of 2003 with the Full Bench supporting in full the original decision of Justice Chisholm.

A number of expert medical witnesses, both national and international, gave evidence in favour of Kevin and these proved enormously significant, not only in supporting a positive outcome in this case, but also in overturning a number of precedents dating back to the *Corbett v Corbett* case in 1970 which found against the transsexual person. As such the outcome of this case has been ground breaking and we acknowledge the tremendous courage of Kevin and Jennifer in their determination to challenge the legal system, the great skill of Rachael Wallbank, their solicitor, and the valuable contribution of all the expert witnesses whose testimony and commitment was so crucial in effecting this historical change.

While the case now opens the door for all people who experience transsexualism to marry a member of the opposite sex, it is important to note that such a right remains available only to those people who have satisfied the necessary criteria in relation to sex affirmation surgery, (sex reassignment surgery).

### Partnerships

As an integral part of the Gender Centre's ongoing philosophy of the value of networking in promoting the rights of the transgender community, we have continued to maintain and foster partnerships with a wide range of external organisations. While these are many and varied, the ones listed below are those with whom our partnerships have been most significant.

#### The Women's Housing Company

As stated in last year's annual report, in the latter part of 2001 we entered into an invaluable partnership with the Women's Housing Company which provided the centre with additional exit-housing for our residential clients. In the partnership we have gained four

*Finding the Real Me* by Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox is unstructured and as such reflects the nature of diversity, stories of male-to-female, female-to-male and androgyny are interspersed with stories of older and younger people, complete and incomplete transitions.

### The H.B.I.G.D.A. XVII Biennial Symposium

The Gender Centre's Counsellor, Elizabeth Anne Riley gives her account of a fraction of the amount of material presented at the Biennial Symposium held in Belgium at which she presented a paper titled, "Counselling Clients with Gender Dysphoria: An Ethical Approach".

### Breast Examination and Other Health Concerns for the Transgendered

The trans woman wants them and the trans man wants to get rid of them. Breasts can be a source of pride to the M.T.F. as hormones work their alchemy, they can also be a visible sign of the incongruity between the inner-self and the outward body presentation of the F.T.M.

Purpling his beard is one of the least incongruous acts of the delightful Billy Connolly.

additional units. The units and tenancies of these properties are managed by the Women's Housing Company with support to residents being provided by the Gender Centre. This arrangement means that eligible residents of our refuge program will be able to enter the units for a period of twelve months after they have completed their stay at the Centre.

I am pleased to be able to report that this program has proved hugely successful. There were no teething problems of note and a number of our residents have now been able to take advantage of exit-housing as an interim step towards independent living. The Women's Housing Company are very supportive and a delight to work alongside. We have also developed a positive working relationship with B. Miles, a women's housing organisation who have a similar partnership with the Women's Housing Company, and who hold two flats in the same complex as the Gender Centre.

In conjunction with this partnership, the Gender Centre received additional funding to employ a part-time case management worker to work specifically with our residential clients, both in our and the Women's Housing Company services. This position was filled in October of 2002 by David Gofton and he has proven to be an extremely caring and effective worker and a valuable addition to the Gender Centre staff.

### **N.S.W. Attorney General's Crime Prevention Division**

As reported last year the Gender Centre submitted an application to the N.S.W. Attorney General's Crime Prevention Division for an Innovative Grant. This was a one-off grant provided to organisations for the purpose of undertaking innovative projects that have the potential to reduce crime. The Gender Centre applied for a grant to conduct an investigation into strategies undertaken, both nationally and internationally, to reduce the levels of violence against minority groups. The aim of the project was to compile a comprehensive report with recommendations on those strategies and to then conduct a trial on one or more of those strategies with a specific focus on the transgender community.

Twelve months on, and after an enormous amount of work and effort from everyone involved, in particular Katherine Cummings, this project is nearing completion. Due to the innovative nature of the work and the many difficulties Katherine encountered in uncovering the necessary resources, and also due to recognition from Attorney General's of the importance of the project, we were successful in applying for a six month extension to complete the report. We expect this to be achieved by December of the current year. My thanks go to the many representatives on the Steering Committee, from DoCS, A.G.s, N.S.W. Police, South Sydney City Council, Marrickville Council, the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project and The Gender Centre, for giving their time and commitment to this project.

Though the project is yet to be completed, one interesting possibility emerging from the research was the possibility of developing a performance piece to tour schools in N.S.W. to promote awareness among young people of gender difference. In pursuit of this goal we applied for a further one off grant for this year. While the assessment panel described the project as innovative and brave they were keen to have a more detailed submission before agreeing to commit funding. In the process, however, we have made solid contact with a professional theatre company, interested in assisting with the project, and we have received the tentative support of the Department of Education and Training. With this in place we are hopeful that our application next year will be successful.

### **Other Significant Partnerships**

We have continued our ongoing representation on two key committees with local councils. These were the Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Advisory Committee with South Sydney City Council, (S.S.C.C.), and the Gay and Lesbian Liaison at Marrickville, (G.L.L.A.M.), with Marrickville Council. Sadly, with the shake up of council boundaries the S.S.C.C. committee is now no longer in operation. Marrickville Council, however, have shown a commitment to providing an appropriate range of services to our community and we are pleased to continue our involvement with them. They have adopted a grass roots approach to the L.G.B.T. communities and are keen to promote diversity within council's boundaries and to conduct a range of community events specifically targeting our communities.

At the time of writing this report, the next planned event will be the Marrickville Festival to be held on Sunday, 21st September. Representatives from the L.G.B.T. communities will be holding a stall at the event to raise our community profile in Marrickville.

### **Employment Equity Specialists Association (E.E.S.A.)**

The Gender Centre is maintaining an active involvement with E.E.S.A. to keep transgender employment on the agenda for E.E.O. practitioners. We continue our membership with E.E.S.A. and will continue to attend meetings where issues being addressed are of relevance to us or where there are issues that we may wish to draw to their attention. Through our work with E.E.S.A., and also with the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (O.D.E.O.P.E.), we seek to achieve strong support from the E.E.S.A. practitioners in the public sector in advancing work opportunities for transgender people.

### **N.S.W. Health**

Apart from the obvious connection we have with N.S.W. Health who, through Central Sydney Area Health Service, provide funding to the Centre, we are also sitting on an advisory committee charged with providing N.S.W. Health with direction on access to health needs for the transgender and intersex communities. This committee is relatively new and is scheduled to meet for a period of one year. We are optimistic that this committee will result in some positive responses to the health needs of our communities and I will inform you of these as they occur.

### **N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Board**

Last, but certainly not least, we have enjoyed a long and positive association with the N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Board. This culminated, during the year, in the running of the "Neglected Communities Forum" at Parliament House, as part of the 2003 Mardi Gras Festival. The keynote speaker at the event was Georgina Beyer, the New Zealand M.P., a delightful woman and a wonderful speaker. Other speakers included Jay Ramanathan, Rachael Wallbank, Tony Briffa, Glen Vassallo and myself. The event was very well received and enormously important in providing a forum for transgender, transsexual, intersex and bisexual people to air those issues that impact upon them.

It is planned to progress the resolution of those issues through further consultation with the A.D.B., but with the unfortunate resignation of Chris Puplick from the board, and the subsequent threat of significant funding cuts to the A.D.B., this process has, at best, been delayed. We can only hope that the funding issues will be satisfactorily resolved and that progress will occur in the coming year.

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Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc., which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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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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## A Class Act on and off the Field

### First Try to Martha

by Peter Fitzsimons, *Sydney Morning Herald* 📅 Saturday 13th September 2003

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Caroline Layt

**N**o, really, you fair dinkum gotta love this city. Take the scene on the banks of St Joseph's College main oval last

Sunday afternoon, a day after the Riverview first XV had defeated Joeys before about fifteen thousand people. There the Joeys class of 1983 found themselves gathering for a barbecue to celebrate the end of their twenty-year reunion weekend. The steaks went down a treat, as did the wine and beer, and as the sun shone strong the years fell away.

So, what the hell? Why not play a bit of a muck around game of footy on the main oval as they did in yesteryear's yore? So they did. The only slightly odd thing was the attractive woman who scored the first try.

*... The only slightly odd thing was the attractive woman who scored the first try.*

She was not a wife or a girlfriend but rather a former classmate who, after a brief period of not knowing whether she was Arthur or Martha, had decided on 'Martha' and soon after school finished had the gender altering operation.

Of course it goes without saying that Martha was a winger when at school, but she was warmly welcomed back the night before by the hundred former classmates who attended the reunion, with not one stray bit of bigoted nastiness. It was admirable, as were the thousand or so Joeys boys who stood and applauded Riverview on the previous day after their deserved G.P.S. victory. You just gotta love this city!

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## The Bottom Line

### Or, Fools and Others I Have Met

by Laura Ann Seabrook

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Laura Seabrook

This is in many ways a reply to "On Acceptance and Employment", which appeared in issue 51 of *Polare*. My point is not so much as to correct the opinions expressed therein, but to show that in dealing with others (and especially with gender transition), "your mileage might vary", as they say on the Internet.

*The thing about fools is that there are just so many of them.*

The crux of the matter as I see it, is how we deal with other people.

Whether we're straight, bent, queer, trannie or whatever, we all live in a social world of human relations and activities. We all interact with others on a day-to-day basis, and so the attitude we take in doing so is going to affect those interactions and our quality of life.

Sometimes what appears to be a handicap can eventually turn into an advantage. I had tonic-clonic epilepsy when I was very young, and again between the ages eight and sixteen. Because of this I already knew, before gender transition, what it was like to feel a freak, to feel isolated and alienated. The epilepsy had other effects as well. I took Dilantin (phenytoin sodium) three times a day. This androgenised me more so than a normal male puberty would and my features became much coarser. The result was that initially in my gender transition I "passed" less often than I would like.

Back then, passing was much more important than it is now. Sometimes I think that M.T.F. trannies have it harder than F.T.M.s. We live in a "patriarchal" society where wealth and power (the ability to make meaningful decisions for ourselves and others) is still largely concentrated in the hands of males. That being so, males are still generally thought of as being "the default", and we look for and see signs of masculinity more quickly than those of femininity.

All of which means that being M.T.F. can be pretty hard, if you let it. So how does one deal with the multitudes that one encounters each day? Here's how I divide them up, based upon my own experience (with examples from my own transition).

### Fools

The thing about fools is that there are just so many of them. I divide Fools from others by the basic premise that fools are out to hurt you, or at least promote their own interests at your expense. There are (in my experience) four types of fools that you're most likely to meet: Punters; Curiosity Seekers; Baiters and Wankers.

#### Punters

These are in some ways the least offensive of fools. They are people who are out to get something (from you), at minimum cost to themselves. Most often they want some form of sexual favour.

My first experience with punters was early in my transition. I was walking home from food shopping and passed a man in the street. He called out "Are you a man or woman?" (henceforth referred to as "the question") At the time I didn't have a good answer to this question - not because of lack of identity, but lack of confidence. I stopped and he seized on the opportunity.

Now I had just produced a twelve page booklet for people at work, about what I was going through (I worked in a service area where I met everybody) so I was still in an informative/educational frame of mind. A big mistake! He seized on the opportunity to want "proof", like say (as he suggested) having a grope of my breasts! I didn't comply and left in a hurry. I met this person only once since and managed to dodge him in a crowd.

Back then I was still very much a shrinking violet Nowadays I'd probably tell someone like that to "fuck off".

Another encounter I had with punters was at the Taxi Club. I'd been in Sydney for a few months (I originally hail from Perth) and heard about this venue. I dressed up, and went with an associate from the hostel where I was staying. Within five minutes a punter latched on to me - he was short, an unemployed plumber from Parramatta, and his wife had just left him the week before. And, of course, he wanted me to go home with him for sex. No drinks, no attempt at conversation, just straight to the point.

At the time I was ambivalent about my sexuality (hadn't had any sex since starting transition) and I even might have considered it a compliment, but what would I have felt like afterwards, after having an oily stranger all over me? No wonder his wife had left him. Naturally I turned him down.

And there's the thing about punters, they always think they can manipulate you into getting what they want. If it's also what you want, fair enough, but encounters with punters will often leave a sour taste (no pun intended) long after they've gone.

## Curiosity Seekers

These are a variation of punter, but less overt. The thing with curiosity seekers is that they think (perhaps due to an upbringing on Jerry Springer and Reality Television shows) that because they know one thing about you, that you're open game for any sort of question, and have no right to a private life.

Hence, the question from a curiosity seeker isn't just one question, but the opening gambit of a series of ever invading personal questions from them. And most often these questions are asked in the most public of places, like shopping centres or waiting for the bus. Such people are more pests than anything else. The best ways I've found to deal with them is either respond as if the question they just asked seems so improbable that they must be either extremely rude or imbecilic, or to engage in sparring on their own terms.

Here's another example. I was waiting for a bus in Adelaide Terrace early Sunday evening. There was only one other person waiting, a short fat man who (as I sat down) was talking to a passer-by. He came up and asked the question.

I was in a much more confident mood than before, and answered back "what sort of question is that to ask a lady?" I kept up this tone for some minutes until the bus came. He was apologetic and kept his distance. The thing was, I hadn't actually answered the question had I, since "lady" can mean many things.

Another example - I was at N.O.W.S.A. '98, a difficult position to be in, as I was treated as a representative for all trannies) and one of the other students there expressed her curiosity about someone like myself. I agreed to answer questions later, but it became obvious when that time came that she was more a curiosity seeker than someone genuinely interested. I agreed to answer more and more personal questions, provided that she gave me "tit for tat" - that is, answered the same sort of questions, but in relation to herself. She shut up, and left me alone.

## Baiters

These are the most dangerous of fools. A baiter might first appear to be either a punter or a curiosity seeker, but the purpose of the question in their hands, isn't to elicit information, but to stimulate a response so that they know they've hooked something.

Most baiters I've encountered have issues with power - or rather their lack of it. Because they lack power, baiters feel insecure, and seek to reassure themselves by inflicting some form of pain upon others, because that can be seen as an exercise in (however limited) power itself. Baiters like to target people who belong to minorities because either they think such people can't fight back, or because they're easy to blame.

My first real taste of baiters was when I first moved to Newcastle. After a short stay with friends, I found a very cheap flat in a suburb called Carrington part of the docklands area of Newcastle. It's a "rough area" and at its height there were seven pubs operating in a small area. Now it's depressed and the only thing open after 7:00pm are the surviving pubs.

It's also the home of a thriving Aboriginal community. After I moved in I was targeted by elements of that community's teenage population. Within a week of moving in, I had about a dozen teenagers on my front veranda, all wanting to ask questions about who and what I was. Only, some of them didn't really want me to answer. I shut the door on them and in retrospect this might not have been the thing to do. There after the teenage boys hounded me.

Every chance they'd get, they'd try and bait me, to get a response from me so that they could hurt me. Sometimes I played the game, other times I didn't. Kids would come past the flat, run up and kick at the front door. It came off twice.

On one occasion I was ready waiting behind the door with a kitchen knife, and cornered the offender in the front yard of the house next door. I did this more for "effect" than anything else, and that too was a mistake (a group of them were waiting around the corner for me - I could have ended up dead).

Then one evening it got too much. My severance pay from the public service had just come through, and friends had just helped me find a car to buy. They'd just dropped me off at my front door. It was dark, and before I entered the flat I heard a "Yeah, a man fer shure!" out of the dark.

It scared the shit out of me, and that night I just couldn't get to sleep. I was in tears and went to see Mary, who lived in the back flat.

I told her what was wrong, and how I'd been harassed by some of the Aboriginal youth in the area. As it happened, she knew the matriarch of the local "mob" (as Mary put it) and told me that she'd have a word with her the following day. She did and unbelievably the attacks and harassment stopped from the day after. Later, when I met the matriarch in person I thanked her. When the opportunity came to move away from Carrington and into my own house though, that's exactly what I did.

Still, the lesson wasn't wasted on me. A few years later when my car (the one my friends had found) was off the road and I had to catch a local bus from a private company into Newcastle University I faced a similar situation. Before it arrived a school bus waited in position ahead of where it would park. Students would then get off my bus and onto the school bus. A group of students on the school bus took

to calling me names and throwing things at me. I waited this out for a few weeks before I'd had enough.

I got on the bus, asked the driver what school it went to, and what suburb the students came from. I then wrote to the school explaining the situation. It was a private Catholic school, and I had a letter of apology from the Principal, and a personal letter of apology from the student involved (who also asked me not to blame the school), and the harassment stopped dead.

What I'd done in both cases was make myself a more costly target for the baiters to attack I'd found out who had authority over the offenders, and taken the issue to them. Sometimes there is no higher authority, and no police about, and discretion is the better part of valour, rather than forcing the issue.

Lately this sort of stuff doesn't affect me much at all. A week ago, as I was in the cafeteria at T.A.F.E. with some fellow students (I'm currently on a Library Course), someone shouted "So, are you really a guy then?" It took five seconds to register with me, that I was the one being shouted at. By that time, though the moment had passed, and the reaction they'd been expecting didn't happen. I never found out who called out, nor could I care less, because the bottom line is, (I guess) that I really don't consider myself a "guy", and those that try such tactics ought to get a life. Ah the joys of being post-operative.

## Wankers

The last bunch of fools is a bit more elusive. "Wanker" is such a pervasive and all purpose insult that we forget exactly what it means. In this instance I'm talking about folk who don't see you as a person as such, but for whatever reason, a stereotype. Wankers come in all shapes and sizes, and the net effect of meeting or dealing with one is that they don't really deal with you, but who they think you are, based on or maybe one or two bits of information about you.

Lots of Wankers are real racists, because it's easier to talk about "Blacks", "Asians" or "Wogs" than it is to treat others like people. If I'd been a wanker myself then after my baiting in Carrington I might have claimed that all Aboriginals were bad, or that teenagers can't be trusted – such assertions though miss the point that it was just individuals dealing with other individuals.

Unfortunately some feminists are also wankers, because they lose track of the difference between theory and reality, finding ways to maintain the barricades against the "trans-offender".

It comes as a shock when those you've been close to turn out to be Wankers.

Here's my experience (with a sequel). An "ex-" (I currently have two) worked in the (then) Commonwealth Employment Service as a case worker. One day a transperson came in for an interview about prospective employment. Because my ex knew me (I'd just started transition) she told the client "I know what you are" and proceeded to give her fashion tips! Naturally enough that client complained; after all, she hadn't gone there to talk about her appearance, but about possible employment.

My ex approached me to write a letter in support in her favour. I said I would, but after almost a week of procrastination I found I just couldn't. The truth was that my ex was an insensitive clod who, just because she knew me, knew nothing about the other person. Saying "I know what you are" can have any number of meanings to the other person, and in truth my ex was very mistaken. She had no idea of just who the client was at all.

Years later I was in Katoomba visiting a friend. We're in the town hall on a fair day and I'm reading Tarot while she's selling herbs. Outside it seems there's another reader (which explained why I didn't have many clients) and on a whim I decided to have a reading by him. At the time I was dressed very casually, wearing an old shirt and long skirt, neither of which was very flattering. As we start the reading he says to me "I know what you are" and I accepted it on face value.

Later, as I go to pay him, he says "gracias senor" and it becomes obvious to me that he doesn't know what I am - instead he thinks that I'm a gay guy. At the time I was annoyed and irritated, but now I realise that if he was off on that, his reading was also very suspect. A few years later when I went to a pagan piss-up (yes, we do have them) in a regional R.S.L. Club, I was told by a drunk participant "I know all about you, I used to live next to the Albury in Oxford St".

Apparently they'd mistaken me for a drag queen. They got a rude rebuttal. Sometimes friends and associates (see below) turn into a form of wanker. You can tell this by the fact that no matter what you started discussing with them, the subject eventually spirals around to some facet of your trans status. When that happens, you know they're more interested in that, than they are in you. Sure, it's reasonable that a friend might take an interest in your transition and how it affects your life, but there's a difference between concern and morbid curiosity. You can tell that difference by weighing up how much the details mean to you (and after a while it's all "old stuff", if you've moved on), and how much it means to them.

The mild form of wanker is someone who looks at you and makes snide comments or giggles to a companion, or gives you a strange grin as they pass you. My response to that (depending on mood) is to either look at them in a totally indifferent manner (I can stare down anyone other than my cats), give them the finger (when I'm in a really bad mood) or find an excuse to talk to them about something. The latter puts them in personal contact, which is probably closer than they'd like to be, but it also puts their rudeness in perspective. Wankers can be extremely annoying, but only if you let them. The main thing to remember is that just because they hold an opinion, that doesn't make that opinion true.

## Others

Well if that's it for fools (and I'm sure that readers of *Polare* can add many other categories), what about the others? There are fewer categories of these. I divide them into Friends and Associates, Family and Strangers.



## Friends and Associates

What's the difference between a friend and associate? It's almost like telling the difference between lemon and lime. Both friends and associates can share the same activities and interests, maybe the same experiences and jokes. But friends are closer than associates, and it can come as a shock to realise that someone you thought as a friend is really just an associate. Confused? The difference is when conditions change, the bad times come or when you're in need. Friends will like you for who you are, and help you if they can. You can be friends with someone and not see them for years, and then just pick up where you left off. A close friend (and most people have maybe a handful of those in a lifetime) is someone you can share your pain/boredom/problems with, and still be a friend. A friend is someone whom it's nice to have approval from. It becomes important when you don't have their approval, because it can hurt.

Associates on the other hand will come into contact with you, not because they like you, but because you're involved in the same activity. Associates can be workmates, hobbyists, people in a particular "scene", other trannies or anyone where the focus of the mutual activity brings you together. The grief comes in treating associates as friends, and expecting them to act as such. Expecting approval from associates is a dangerous and unpredictable activity. You might get it, but only conditionally.

Long before I faced my gender issues, I was a science fiction fan. For twenty years I was involved in "fandom", a community of science fiction literature and media fans. This was always a bitter-sweet relationship. I enjoyed the subject matter, but I was also looking for a level of community that for me, wasn't there. After I started my gender transition, and was still employed in the public service, I had every intention of remaining in local fandom. I attended one Swancon (local annual convention) as Laura. The reception was very mixed.

I was in fact, looking for approval from fandom and got upset when I didn't get it. In fact, when I ended my "geographical" that I'd done in Sydney and returned to Perth, one of the first things I did was attend that year's Swancon, which I'd already committed myself to. I was under a lot of stress at the time, and realised that there just wasn't what I was looking for, where I was looking for it I got suicidal (twenty years of chasing something that didn't exist has an impact) and ended up in Royal Perth Hospital for observation.

In fact, fandom is a mixed community and the vast bulk of those I met in it were associates, not friends. The bottom line for fandom, and for any "scene" or "social arena" where you're active (including a trans one), is to be able to differentiate between associates and friends. Extend your friendship to all if you wish, but only share personal emotional content with friends, or you'll get hurt when they don't reciprocate.

## Family

Family differ from friends and associates in that you can't choose them. Rather, they come with how one comes into this world, and how our affections develop. We may die alone, but we are always born with at least one other person, our biological mother.

Of course, thereafter, anything goes. You can get adopted/fostered out, left in an orphanage, abused or neglected. You can meet a "soul mate", spouse or have a string of partners (or not); have any number of children (either by natural means, by or adoption) and any amount of extended family.

There are no guarantees in this life the bottom line this time though is that, in general, families are people we know very well, and care about (and hope that they care about us reciprocally). Because of this, dealing with families can be the most awkward and sensitive matter. I'm no expert when it comes to this (or really, any of the above). I have my own experience which on the whole has been positive. The first member of my immediate family that I "came-out" to was my brother Mark, when he was helping me move furniture into a new flat. I more or less mentioned it as an aside before we tackled the sofa. I also asked him not to tell anyone else just yet. The next person was my mother. I took her to see the film *The Sum of Us* which is about a gay son and a straight father, who love each other in an honest fashion. She thought that I was going to come-out as being gay, so the transsexual angle really surprised her.

Both Mark and Mum were in shock for a few days, but coming-out, as we all know, was a necessary step before gender transition. I next met my father by accident. It was the day that I mark the "official" start of my transition from - the day my name change came through - and I met him just outside the barber's where he regularly had his haircut. I gave him a copy of the brochure that I'd made for work but didn't tell him anything further.

It was a few days later, while I was on long-service leave, that I first visited my parent's house as Laura. I can still remember walking down the driveway dressed. I saw my father looking at me and smiling, and then looking away with a frown. This hurt me for a long time. But my father isn't that young. He fought in the Pacific in W.W.I., and is very set in his ways.

I guess, even if I thought that I wanted approval from my family, what I really wanted was love and understanding. Perhaps, I think, the first is easier to come by than the second. Someone can love you without understanding you, and I believe that's what my family does. You can love someone and still disagree with them. My other brother Vaughan, suggested that! was making a mistake and that a six month world tour was an antidote. I know that by the end of that tour nothing would have changed.

In the end, I also knew that my future wasn't in Perth, and I moved to Newcastle to start a university course and otherwise make a new life for myself I still keep in contact with my family, but this is mostly by phone with Mum. After my father had a stroke and ended up in a nursing home, I made a point of flying over to visit him. The thing was, I loved him, and wanted to see him before he died. I also knew, that even if he didn't understand me, that he loved me.

I guess I'm lucky in this respect because I'm still talking to my family. There are many others like me who either can't or don't. The family situation can be the most painful one. My bottom lines were listed above, what are yours?

## Strangers

And here we come to the last sub-category, strangers. No need for a definition since strangers are folk you don't know. You wouldn't think that I'd need to talk about how to deal with strangers, but I do. Why? Because lots of trannies seem to behave differently to strangers post-transition than the way they did pre-transition.

Before transition, did you walk down the street and worry about what the person walking the other way on the other side of the street thought? Probably not. But a lot of trannies do post-transition. Part of this (and the impetus for "passing") is the worry that strangers will turn into one of the variety of fools listed above (and someone asking the question will do just that).

And yet, can you live your life perpetually in paranoia and fear? I don't think so. At some point hopefully (and sometimes this takes years) you might come to the same conclusion as I did. To quote "The Cowboy and the Farmer should be Friends" in "Oklahoma!": "I don't say I'm no better than anybody else, but I'll be danged if I ain't just as good!" And this I think is the start of that thin line (which I've referred to as a bottom line) between needing/wanting other people's approval, and settling for your own instead.

## The Bottom Line

That's the point of this whole article too. The truth is that in most cases you don't need other people's approval, but in the long run, you do need your own. Life can be very lonely and confusing at times, but you don't have to be tranny to know or experience that. We are not special cases when it comes to this, but very much a part of humanity.

It's up to us to make an effort so that, being tranny or not, we have friends, family and associates: to help us get through this life; to share the good and bad times with; and to enrich the experience in doing so. No one said that was easy, for anyone, let alone us. But the effort is the point, and in the long run much more satisfying than if everything fell into our laps.

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# Louise

## Where have you gone? Where have I gone?

by Paula Kaye

Article appeared in Polare magazine: October 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



I remember that summer.

The last summer I spent with Louise.

The days, hot and fierce, reeling, like a slap in the face; gasping, like the wind knocked out of you.

Hot as corrugated iron; dry as drought. The long twilights, lingering and languorous, cooled by the soft sea breeze from over Coogee beach.

The last summer I spent with Louise. The last summer she wasn't Louise.

The last summer she wasn't a woman.

Almost ... almost wasn't ...

***I remember her hair, brown and long, a river of dreams flowing lusciously down ...***

She dressed then exclusively, exquisitely, in soft sarongs, in lilacs and blues, the colour of sky, the colour of serenity. Her floaty, filmy Indian shirts and blouses brilliant white against her honey brown skin.

I remember her hair, brown and long, a river of dreams flowing lusciously down the hollow oilier back. Soft and straight, in shades of auburn and amber with flashes of copper.

Dark drifts drawing me in to their warm, fragrant secrets, highlights bleached light and golden by the sun. I see her now, silhouetted by the moon, silvered, charmed, on all fours over me, a she-wolf, swaying and brushing that long, soft, feather light hair across my bare breast.

Oh! Louise! Where have you gone? Where have I gone?

I remember her body. Tall, slender, slinking, sensuous; sliding with an easy grace through my heavy hearted days. Her skin a golden honey brown, warmed by the sun, fragrant with patchouli and jasmine, Spiritual Sky.

The moon rides high over Coogee Bay, a bright white belly moon, swollen with promise. Louise is a sliver of silver drawn along my bed. My hand, nut brown against her honey, slides over her arm and onto her soft, smooth stomach, slightly rounded already. Is she too swollen with promise ... then ... now?

She whimpers and stirs, stretching her long limbs under the moon. I slide onto her penis. She is the shape of heaven, the size of paradise. I have never spoken of my love, my fingertips speak my truth. She moans, she turns, hunching into a foetus-child in my arms.

She has reached the outer limit, the knife-edge. Tasting honey, she withdraws before the sweet turns bitter.

But I am bitter. Bitter as gall with the sharp, hot fire of desire coursing my veins like acid. Distressed and with no repose.

I rise and pace the cool, smooth tiles of the veranda.

Through my window, Louise melts into the moon, her tide ebbing.

Headlights search the stucco, feeling like blind men around a difficult corner. Gone, they leave the street silent, bathed only in moonlight. I watch the chrome and duco reflect the moon reflect the sun, long gone.

The night air is cool, soothing like a mother's cool touch on a child's hot fever. My fever subsides. Louise is draped across my bed, draped across my life, like a shawl, decorative, insubstantial, impractical.

I grip the cool iron of the railing and for an instant, almost not there, my hand delays its release. Then I come free.

Returning to my bed I watch the slow rise and fall of her breasts, already swelling, moonlight catching on pale hairs.

Nuzzling the fragrant warmth oilier hair I bury my head and my troubles. Stirring but not waking she spoons into my stomach, her

bottom already soft and substantial.

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# Tales of Tiresias

## The Gender Centre's Early History

by Roberta Perkins

Article Appeared in Polare Magazine: October 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



The original Tiresias House

**I**t was July 1983. The phone rang and when I answered it a voice on the other end said: "Mr. Walker would like to meet you." An appointment was made and when I arrived at his office, Frank Walker, State Minister of Youth and Community Services, greeted me with the fact that he had read my recently published book, *The "Drag Queen" Scene*.

*The first group of residents consisted of young trannies traumatised by being cast out of their parental homes or drifting around the Cross searching for identity roots.*

This was based on a study I had done on the transgender subculture in Kings Cross, and what had impressed - nay, disturbed - him about it most was the semi-nomadic lives young transgenders experienced, forced from their apartments by landlords and unable to get overnight residence in either a men's

or a women's refuge - apart from "A Women's Place" in the Cross, which catered for young street women addicts and was always filled to bursting.

Walker's words have never left me. "Roberta, we have got to find them a place where they can lay their heads at night."

Two months later a cheque arrived addressed to me and a house was provided as a refuge strictly for trannies. In October the doors opened at 75 Morgan St., Petersham, and its twelve bed spaces - two double-bunk beds in each of three bedrooms - were filled immediately. On 14th December 1983 Frank Walker officially opened Tiresias House.

The Australian Transsexual Association (A.T.A.), had been founded by a small group of trannies including myself two years earlier at the Wayside Chapel, where I ran a counselling service and it became involved in organising Tiresias and appointed me as the first co-ordinator. The aim of the A.T.A. was to support trannies by advocating legal and social changes. The founding of Tiresias was its proudest moment. We spent an entire day discussing a name for the place and finally decided on Tiresias, after the hero in Greek mythology whose sex was changed by the gods from man to woman because of his disrespect for women. Ten years later after Tiresias admitted that sex was ten times better as a woman than as a man the gods changed her back, from woman to man. The name was retained for the first five or six years after which it was renamed the Gender Centre. In the meantime Tiresias' bed spaces increased to sixteen by turning the lounge room into a fourth bedroom.

Walker's department came to the rescue by providing us with a second house located in Ashfield, which we dubbed Lili Elbe House, after the first surgical "sex-change" in 1930. A third house was provided in Haberfield, so that by mid-1984 we had a structured residential system from short to medium-term accommodation.

The first group of residents consisted of young trannies traumatised by being cast out of their parental homes or drifting around the Cross searching for identity roots.

Apart from the occasional tantrum, they caused few problems and were ideal refuge residents. By mid-1984 a new group sought accommodation. These were trannies who had spent time in gaol and were on parole.

Most of them had worked on the streets to support a heavy addiction.

They were victims of a swift change in prostitution laws that drove them from the streets and forced them into holding up banks to pay for their raging habits. The term in prison had sobered them but they were badly in need of social welfare support. I had been visiting them in gaol and came to an arrangement with the Department of Corrective Services to have Tiresias registered as a halfway house for their benefit.

It wasn't long before the parolees were back on drugs and "cracking it" in the Cross. Worse still, the house mix of these street-wise trannies and the earlier group of naive middleclass kids proved to be a disaster, for the latter were soon also on drugs, working the streets and rapidly losing their innocence.

Things began to go from bad to worse when police clamped down on the streets and "my girls" began picking the pockets of guys in

the local pub. I told them that if they had to roll their customers they should do it in the Cross, where it is expected and not "shit in their own nest" in Petersham.

Soon, we had guys outside the house yelling they had been robbed, local gangs threatening to break in and rape and bash the lot of us, and police, who had earlier provided protection against local bullies, now banging on the door and carting residents away.

Walker's department once more came to the rescue by providing a fourth house alongside the Petersham railway station. These premises became the official halfway house complete with a detoxification unit and residential nurse. Designed to keep the parolees and the "nice" middle class kids apart, it ultimately failed because the parolees were either back in gaol or had drifted away from Tiresias. Some ended tragically, dying young of an overdose, suicide or AIDS. In some cases, the process reversed with the middle class kids providing a positive model for the parolees to find a straight life and they often shared medium-term accommodation harmoniously in Lili Elbe House. While I managed to keep Tiresias from going completely chaotic, in spite of continuous infighting, the most unfortunate incident was not due to the incompatible mix.

It occurred in 1984 when one of our original residents decided he no longer wanted to be a woman, which was okay, except he turned on Tiresias by going to the media and accusing us of forcing him into women's clothes and getting him hooked on heroin.

These were indeed dark days for me, having to publicly defend my reputation and that of Tiresias House. My staff were driven to nearly insane by the media barrage and I was convinced that Tiresias' days were well and truly numbered. In the end Walker's department proved to be true stalwarts and the Minister placated his nervous parliamentary colleagues by assuring them that it was all an overblown fabrication. The first two year period of Tiresias was the roughest for all of us - residents, staff and me - after which a period of relative stability followed. At times I had been brought to the brink of a breakdown, but I survived. I left in 1985 convinced Tiresias had passed its teething problems unscarred. Only you can judge in was correct.

*Sydney Morning Herald: Wednesday December 14th 1983*

## Home aims to help 'oppressed, misunderstood' transsexuals

By PAOLA TOTARO

Jamie Holmes is an outgoing blond 24-year-old.

Three years ago his wife, Linda, was killed in a car accident. Their unborn twins also died in the smash.

Today, Jamie is a resident at Tiresias House in Petersham, the first refuge for transsexuals in Australia.

During the last 12 months Jamie decided he would take the final steps to embrace the lifestyle of a woman.

And within the next year, he hopes he will have a sex-change operation to fulfil a lifelong wish.

Jamie is one of an estimated 500 transsexuals living in Sydney. As a minority community, transsexuals have the highest per capita suicide rate in the country.

Their lives, says Jamie, are not only fraught with personal and psychiatric difficulties but they also have the problem of facing society's traditional prejudice against men who wish to live as women, or women who wish to live as men.

Jamie says unemployment is a common denominator among transsexuals and, as a result, secure accommodation is almost impossible to find.

At the moment, Jamie is unemployed, although he has been offered the possibility of obtaining a taxi driver's licence. This step, however, will involve reverting, at least temporarily, to his male identity.

A sign on the lounge room wall of Tiresias House may explain the residents' feelings best.

"If you want to know who your friends are . . . change your sex," it reads.



Mr Walker with three of the residents, from left, Bianca Hensen, Shayne Platt and Susan Barden.

Transsexuals, says Kathy Lenard, another resident of the house, are forced to live not only with their own personal identity problems but also with the prejudices of society.

"Your family does not understand you, employers are intolerant, and landlords even more so."

Tiresias House, which Kathy and Jamie share with three others, is a comfortable suburban house set in a manicured garden. It is the first refuge of its type — an attempt to alleviate the pressures faced by transsexuals

particularly during the period before and after sex-reassignment surgery.

Yesterday, the Minister for Youth and Community Services, Mr Walker, opened the house and handed over \$52,314 to cover the refuge's operating costs and staff salaries for 1984.

According to Mr Walker, transsexuals are one of the most misunderstood, oppressed and ill-treated minority groups in society.

"Hopefully, Tiresias House will do much to overcome these problems," he said.

Tiresias (named after a Greek god who was said to have been transformed from man to woman and back again) will be run and staffed by transsexuals.

It will offer accommodation for three months for up to six people and will provide counselling and courses in self-defence, self-assertion, job training and living skills.

The residents will meet once a week for counselling sessions and a doctor will also make weekly visits to help transsexuals adjust after the sex reassignment operations.

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# What are you, Male, Female, or Neither of the Above?

## Pamela Stephenson on the Binary System

by Pamela Stephenson, Daily Telegraph, U.K.

Article appeared in Polare magazine: October 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Pamela Stephenson

If voluntary change is tough, though, it's still a piece of cake compared with what is suffered by the true heroes of change in our society: trans people, whose physical bodies are at odds with their inner-sense of gender.

*... abolishing the binary system. Surely we can make room for the ambiguous, the third-gendered, the "not neatly boxed"*

How do you react when you meet a man in a pleated skirt?

No, I am not talking about a Scotsman in Highland dress; if that were my husband, the only incongruous thing about him would be his purple beard.

No, I'm referring to those people who defy gender description; the fully-bloused matron with a five-o'clock shadow, the tomboyish teenager with flattened C-

cupps, the gravel-voiced coquette in the size 12 heels.

I have met many such gender terminators, in different parts of the world.

Most of those who were raised in Western societies have been horribly scarred from an early age by the trauma of rejection, mockery and persecution, just because they do not fully conform to the shape of their genitals. I have come to realise that our society is all the poorer for want of an accepted role for people who don't know whether to tick the male or female box on their passport forms.

In some other societies, Samoa for example, such people are generally allowed to be more flexible. They can do tough-guy work and soprano choir-singing all in the same day.

By contrast, in Britain we are only comfortable when a person's body-shape consistently matches the mind, the voice, the facial hair, the manner. Nature loves variety but society hates it.

The fact is that, worldwide, there are a great many human beings whose gender-identity is at odds with their appearance, and recent studies have shown that an interesting development in some people's brains may trigger such a phenomenon.

Whatever the reason, different cultures react to transpeople in myriad ways, some revering them, some ostracising them, some even putting them to death. In Britain our modus operandi is to ridicule, avoid and deny them human rights unless, of course; they're in show business. Few men who wear a dress on television, however, are actually transgendered.

I used to grit my teeth when my *Not the Nine O'clock News* co-stars stole my thunder by wearing "drag". It was always a hoot to see them that way, yet at the time I felt there were few enough female roles to go around without any of the boys getting in on the act - but I digress.

There's a big difference between transvestites (people who cross-dress for fun or pleasure) and trans-people, for whom cross-dressing is rather an often-painful attempt to achieve mind-body congruence. Our long tradition of entertainment gender-bending, be it Shakespearean, pantomime dame, the "bearded lady" of the circus or Benny Hill, may have served to decrease understanding for the ordinary trans-person desperately trying to hang on to a job in a bank.

Of course, transgenderism is not about sexuality, or sexual orientation - in fact, they are quite separate concepts. Some people are apt to assume, for example that the "man" in the street wearing a miniskirt must be gay, when in fact that person might be either gay, straight or bisexual. Yes, it's complex, but so is personkind.

We've come some way in tolerating difference, but I wish we could follow the example of some Native American tribal people who, when observing gender ambiguity in a child, will contentedly remark, "Look. There's woman spirit in that boy" and offer to swap his arrow for a bowl.

Our trans-people deserve to be appreciated as rightful and valuable members of our society, but beyond that is the hardest and most



necessary step: abolishing the binary system. Surely we can make room for the ambiguous, the third-gendered, the "not neatly boxed". Some people simply need to be respectfully consulted about which pronouns they prefer, and given a washroom marked "Just Different".

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## Book Review: Finding the Real Me

### True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity

Reviewed by Niko Lekay

Article appeared in Polare magazine: October 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Finding The Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity by Tracie O'Keefe & Katrina Fox.

#### Finding the Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity

by Tracie O'Keefe & Katrina Fox  
Published by Jossey-Bass (2003)  
I.S.B.N. -13 978 0787965472

***What this book offers is stories that may be close to what you want to hear, but it also forces you to understand how richly varied people are.***

I read this book for a reason, to help me understand, so I can help my friend and his/her family. To understand how older transwomen, playing the role of a male bastion of society, experience and manage their self-discovery and the presentation of their sex and gender. I raced through the book, jotting down the notes that rang bells.

The layout of the book is unstructured, reflecting the nature of diversity, so that stories of male-to-female, female-to-male, and androgyny are interspersed with stories of older and younger people, complete and incomplete transitions. Had the editors structured the book into sections, I would have read only what I wanted to, and would have missed the rest. What this book offers is stories that may be close to what you want to hear, but it also forces you to understand how richly varied people are.

A book like this one saves you from feeling that you are alone. But while there is comfort to be found in stories that resonate with your own experience, there is the additional possibility

of discovering what you did not know. The 'real desire that dare not speak its name' is where many of these stories begin. Rebecca writes "I struggled to understand myself because I did not have a language that adequately described me". The work of making sense out of language and ideas that contradict what we intuitively know is hard enough, but so much harder when fear, secrecy and isolation are added to perplexity.

It is difficult to imagine, to those for whom sex and gender are taken for granted, like the ground we stand on, just what it is like to not have that. Many of the people writing for this collection call it a curse, and they are jealous of 'normality'. Rebecca says she was envious of girls her own age over their dress and appearance. She resorted to secretly trying on some of her sister's clothes, with the result that she became fascinated by signifiers of difference. In most of these stories, this fascination is not tolerated, and so begins a roller coaster ride of denial. Trying on clothes, hairstyles, ways of walking, being in secret. Coming close to declarations, or to being discovered, and so a flight back to the script that 'normality' prescribes. It becomes a 'typical purging pattern' that lasts for years, damages relationships and builds layers of guilt. A pattern that fiendishly asserts itself at the worst of times. As Rikki says, "when my life and relationships were not going well my desire to cross-dress increased". To read so many voices saying the same thing might make it a bit easier to imagine and to understand.

In two or three stories I find sentences that marry perfectly. Christine Burns writes: "It wasn't the prospect of change that terrified me, but the consequences". Melanie McMullan puts it directly: "who will accept me as I am?"

Certainly the Internet is a godsend, as a way of finding acceptance, of developing self-understanding together with others, but it isn't enough. One of the nightmares is what will happen if abandonment of existing relations is not an option.

Jennifer explains that: "my relationships to significant others are an integral part of my 'authentic-self', but we [she and her long-term partner] have not found a model for maintaining these relationships while going through transition".

Those people who most need this book are those who are most uncertain, or their loved ones who are trying to understand. The stories of success, of looking back and measuring up the cost and saying it was worth it, are encouraging and give hope and confidence. But we also need to hear of doubt, of failures, and of the determination to keep trying to find a way that is responsive to our unique circumstances.

In a letter to *Polare* (June-July 2002) a person writes: "I became fully aware ... of the distress my wife was going through ... Before I slept that night, I realised I could not carry on. I felt I had more to lose than I had to gain ... was I transsexual, or just on a mid-life escape trip?" Jennifer shows how she is still finding herself now, that even as she writes she is still making mistakes.



So she writes that even recently, "it was easier to tell myself and my partner that I was a cross-dresser than to admit the possibility that my core gender identity is feminine". Perhaps as a consequence of this uncertainty, her partner tends to see her gender expression as a 'hobby' to be tolerated, to be kept in its place, but not encouraged.

There is much to learn from these stories - both for those engaged in finding themselves, their sex and gender, and for those close to them. Christine Burns puts it in a nutshell: "I had to learn to see the curse as a gift, and so I've set out to teach people what I see".

This is not a position based upon ideals, although it sounds like it. It is based, rather, on the gritty reality that to find the 'real me', one doesn't have to be socially suicidal, that one has the right to privacy, that one may choose the time, the place and the company for coming-out. And the last story impels us to return to the beginning as one realises this selection of life cases is an ongoing transition, a re-entrant rollercoaster pattern of dilemmas to solve.


*Finding the Real Me* does not attempt to present a series of stories showing methods of achieving 'success' in transition. There is no simple way to find the 'real me'. Some people found the 'real me' and went on from there. For others, it is never a matter of ridding the real-self, but of creating it.

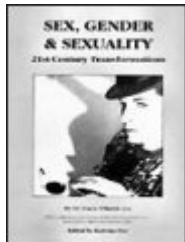
## Dr. Tracie O'Keefe D.C.H., B.H.Sc., N.D.

**From Tracie O'Keefe's website:**  Tracie O'Keefe is a qualified and registered clinical hypnotherapist (A.S.O.C.H.A., psychotherapist, counsellor, mental health professional and trainer, working from a naturopathic perspective in Sydney, Australia. She trained at a post-graduate level with the National School of Hypnosis and Advanced Psychotherapy in London, U.K. U.K.C.P.-recognised school). Her degree and doctorate were earned at the American Institute of Hypnotherapy in the U.S.A. and issued in co-ordination with the Bureau for Private Post-Secondary and Vocational Education in California. She has been a family and couples therapist, a sex therapist and addictions therapist for many years and a qualified naturopath and medical herbalist, who trained in nutritional medicine with the Australian Institute of Applied Sciences. She holds a Bachelor of Health Sciences Degree in Complementary Medicine from Charles Sturt University. She is also an internationally published researcher, author and editor of the following books. [Read more about Dr. Tracie O'Keefe at her website](#) 




**Trans-X-U-All: The Naked Difference**  
Author: Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox Publisher: Extraordinary People Press (1997)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0952948209.

**From Google Books:**  This fresh and concise work takes an exciting look at the world of transsexuals. It explains the whole gender reassignment process from start to finish and includes deeply moving stories written by transsexuals themselves, their lovers, families and friends. Scientific, factual, informative, it provides, in accessible language, a comprehensive guide to the world of transsexuality.




**Sex, Gender & Sexuality: 21st Century Transformations**  
Author: Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox  
Publisher: Extraordinary People Press (1999)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0952948223


**From Google Books:**  This book dispels much of the mysticism around physical sex, gender constructs, and the diversity of sexuality. As well as considering gay, lesbian, transsexual and transgendered identities, it also looks at the intersex groups, such as hermaphrodites, and people who identify as androgynous or as being without sex or gender.

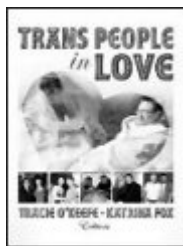


**Finding the Real Me: True Tales of Sex and Gender Diversity**  
Author: Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox  
Publisher: Jossey-Bass (2003)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978-0787965471

**From Google Books:**  *Finding the Real Me* is an extraordinary collection of real-life stories told by a wide-range of sex and gender diverse people. These healing tales of struggle and transformation reveal just how creative, resourceful, and adventurous the individuals in this community can be and also helps to bridge the gap between ignorance and understanding. As each incredible story unfolds we become part of the author's journey to self-acceptance and join the celebration of their new life. Page by page, we laugh, cry, and learn to appreciate these wonderful courageous people and the road they walked to be their true-selves. *Finding the Real Me* is a landmark book that encourages us to embrace diversity, to never fear our differences, and to remain always in awe of our amazing possibilities.

**Trans People in Love**  
Author: Tracie O'Keefe and Katrina Fox  
Publisher: Routledge (2008)  
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0789035721

**From Google Books:**  *Trans People in Love* provides a forum for the experience of being in love and in relationships with significant others for members of the trans community. This honest and



**respectful volume tells clinicians, scholars, and trans people themselves of the beauty and complexity that trans identity brings to a romantic relationship, what skills and mindsets are needed to forge positive relationships, and demonstrates the reality that trans people in all stages of transition can create stable and loving relationships that are both physically and emotionally fulfilling.**

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.



(The Gender Centre advise that this article may not be 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.)

## The H.B.I.G.D.A. XVIII Biennial Symposium

10-13 September 2003, Ghent, Belgium

by Elizabeth Anne Riley

Article appeared in Polare magazine: October 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

I arrived at the opening introduction. An informal occasion for networking and chatting. Here I recognised Randi Ettner author of "Gender Loving Care" and began the meeting of minds ...

***Vern Bullough (U.S.A.) mentioned that there are twelve Catholic saints who were only identified as women upon their death.***

There were many presentations most of which ran in parallel. This was extremely unfortunate as there were at least fifty presentations that I could not attend. The committee was given very loud feedback regarding this aspect, so hopefully will take note for future symposiums.

Following is a run-down of some aspects I found particularly interesting.

- » A new version of the Harry Benjamin standards is currently being devised to reflect and respect the continuity of the spectrum of clients' needs and an awareness that professionals need training to include the acceptance of diversity within the community.
- » Canadian prisons must now pay for gender re-assignment surgery for inmates.
- » Only four states in U.S. have anti-discrimination laws protecting the transgender community.
- » "In Germany a population of 65 million alone there are 45,000 recorded cases of Gender Dysphoria from medical records, but self-help organisations report more like 400,000 cases" - Friedemann Pfaefflin (Germany)
- » Friedemann then hypothesised that "the characteristics of the medical provider may affect the prevalence rate" and "bigger cities, that have clinics, have higher prevalence rates (than smaller cities)".
- » 27 percent of applicants for reassignment surgery in Sweden are foreigners.
- » Vern Bullough (U.S.A.) mentioned that there are twelve Catholic saints who were only identified as women upon their death.
- » Pamela Connolly (U.S.A.) presented the multicultural perspective of clients in Samoa, Tonga and India.
- » Professor Louis Gooren gave a wondrous and scientific account of how testosterone levels at different phases effect genital formation and growth. He then went on to discuss the "bed nucleus of the stria terminalis" which was about the time I began to glaze over.
- » Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis (the Netherlands) gave an



Former Gender Centre Counsellor,  
Elizabeth Anne Riley

account of children with Gender Identity Disorder in Canada and the Netherlands. Ken Zucker (Canada) debating Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (D.S.M.) - the reasons to de-list/retain Gender Identity Disorder in the next D.S.M. due out in about 5-6 years.

- » Professor Louis Gooren spoke in depth about the specific effects of hormones in both M.T.F. and F.T.M. clients.
- » There was a fascinating account of Cricothyroid approximation and the use of other phonosurgical procedures to alter perception of the sexual orientation of the voice. James P. Thomas (U.S.A.).
- » My paper, "Counselling Clients with Gender Dysphoria: An Ethical Approach" was well received. I will give a summary in next *Polare*.
- » Joris Hage (Netherlands) gave a historical review of sex reassignment surgery.
- » Stan Monstrey (Belgium) spoke about phalloplasty - "Is it worthwhile"
- » "Vaginoplasty, Dr. Preecha said in Bangkok they have completed 2,500 gender reassignments between 1980 and 2002. He mentioned four cases of necrosis but not a single case in the last four years.
- » Stephen Whittle (U.K.) gave an account of ethics, law and practice.
- » Richard Green (U.K.) discussed "Legal and Illegal Discrimination against Transsexuals" and the "Gender Recognition Bill" to be presented in Spring 2004 that provides full legal recognition of the new gender for all purposes including marriage.
- » Tom Mazur (U.S.A.) discussed a number of intersex conditions and research results regarding indications of Gender Dysphoria in this population. In 89 cases of various intersex conditions there were only two cases with gender dysphoria (one F.T.M. and one M.T.F.). In both cases the condition was Partial Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (P.A.I.S.)
- » Kate Bornstein presented a video presentation "Taking the Last Drag". A humorous look into why transgender people should not smoke.

## Quotes:

- » "Character is only one factor in determination of sex and does not override gender identity" - Eli Coleman, President of H.B.I.G.D.A.
- » "Legal recognition and rights are necessary for sexual health" - Eli Coleman"
- » "Poor peer relations were the highest indicator for children's psycho-social success" - Peggy T. Cohen--Kettenis.
- » "Success of hormones depends on age, genetics, race and good luck" - Professor Louis Gooren.
- » "(transsexuals) have no higher cardiovascular mortality than the regular population" - Professor Louis Gooren.
- » "Only four cases of breast cancer in M.T.F.s ever and no cases in Amsterdam" - Professor Louis Gooren.
- » "In M.T.F.s, only two cases known of prostate cancer" Professor Louis Gooren.
- » "In F.T.M.s only two cases of ovarian cancer in Amsterdam" - Professor Louis Gooren.
- » "All complications (of F.T.M. surgery) were in smokers" Stan Monstrey (Belgium)
- » "Operating on a smoker is like operating on someone who is 70 irrespective of their age" - Preecha Tiewtranon (Thailand)
- » "In the U.K. £6m - £12m has been spent to prevent transgender rights by various groups" - Richard Green (U.K.)
- » "Law is not about control- it is about vision" - Stephen Whittle
- » "the church is the largest group of transvestites in the world" - Friedemann Pfaefflin.

Above is a mere fraction of the amount of remarkable material presented at the conference and I want to thank the Management Committee for providing me the opportunity to experience such a marvellous, extraordinary and informative event.

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# Breast Examination

## Health Concerns for the Transgendered

by the Ingersoll Gender Centre

Article appeared in Polare magazine: October 2003 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



The male-to-female transsexual or transgendered person wants them and, generally speaking, the female-to-male wants to get rid of them.

**W**hy this information? The male-to-female transsexual or transgendered person wants them and, generally speaking, the female-to-male wants to get rid of them. Breasts can be a source of pride to the M.T.F. as hormones work their alchemy. They can also be a source of anxiety if they don't develop as rapidly or as much as the M.T.F. feels they should. Breasts can also be just one more visible sign of the incongruity between the inner-self and the outward body presentation of the female-to-male transsexual or transgendered person.

*... there are not enough long-term studies of breast disease in the M.T.F. population to dismiss the possibility of increased risk (of breast disease)*

This information is for both the F.T.M. and M.T.F. community. It will discuss the issue of breast care from two points of view: for the F.T.M. who is on androgen therapy and may or may not plan to have a mastectomy, and for the M.T.F. who is on a female hormone regimen and hopes to increase breast size.

### Female-to-male transsexuals or transgendered People

It was estimated in the United States in 1996 that 184,300 genetic women would be diagnosed with breast cancer, and that 44,300, or 24 percent would die as a result. In fact, breast cancer is the leading cause of death, from all causes, for genetic women between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-four.

For the female-to-Male transsexual struggling with the body given to them at birth, breasts can at times been seen as 'the enemy'. While this is a normal part of the journey toward matching mind and body, it can be a dangerous mind set. It's true that nature may have made a mistake in pairing body and perceived self, but for as long as that body has breasts, they must be cared for.

As a part of the process of transition, many F.T.M.s choose to have top surgery which eliminates the need for concern about breast disease. It is currently unknown what effect a male hormone regimen has on the incidence of breast cancer in genetic females. It is known however, that there is a possibility of the occurrence of cancer or other benign breast disease as long as the female-to-male transsexual has breasts. It is important to regularly monitor breast health.

### Male-to-female transsexuals or transgendered People

Amid all the storm and stress, misunderstanding and misinformation associated with changing one's sex/gender, probably the last thing an M.T.F. voyager wants to hear is that with the development of breasts there is also the chance of breast disease. Unfortunately, this is the case; but there is some encouraging news. According to Sheila Kirk, M.D., who is a leading authority on transgender health issues, the incidence of breast cancer in genetic males who are on feminizing hormones appears to be no greater than that of genetic males not on feminizing hormones. This is positive news because breast cancer in men is rare. Based on projections from the Komen Alliance, it was estimated that in the United States in 1996, 1,400 men would be diagnosed with the disease, and that 260 would die as a result.

However, before M.T.F.s conclude that they have little or nothing to worry about with regard to breast cancer, Dr. Kirk cautions that there are not enough long-term studies of breast disease in the M.T.F. population to dismiss the possibility of increased risk. She also suggests that possible risk factors such as high doses of oestrogen over many years, and the role of a family history of breast cancer need to be researched. But beyond the lack of studies on breast cancer, Dr. Kirk points out that M.T.F.s are subject to other, benign changes in their breasts; such as cysts, thickening, or other unusual tissue build-up. These changes should be detected and evaluated by a physician, according to Dr. Kirk, as they may be potential problem areas.

If you are at any point in the transition from male-to-female and have experienced breast development as a result of hormonal therapy, it might be wise to learn how to give yourself regular breast examinations to help safeguard against breast disease.

It would seem reasonable that M.T.F.s do everything they can to insure good breast health until, and after, more conclusive data is available. The basis for concern is, that if by some rare chance you do develop breast cancer, your survival is vitally dependent upon

how early it is diagnosed and treated. This is crucial! Once the disease has developed, the survival rates are the same for genetic males and genetic females alike. That is why early detection is stressed.

## Methods of Breast Examination

For the F.T.M. and the M.T.F., the primary methods for the detection of potential problems are: the clinical examination, the mammography, and the breast self-examination.

### The Clinical Examination

The clinical examination is performed by your physician or other health care professional at a check-up or office visit. This screening can be of great value since it is presumed that the practitioner has had special training or extensive experience in breast care. (Hopefully this is the case with your physician). The clinical exam is something every M.T.F. or genetic female would have at least once a year. Theoretically, it could be performed four or five times a year, but this usually isn't practical.

### Mammography

Mammography, which is an x-ray of the breast, is the most effective screening method. It can detect growths the size of a pin head, long before they can be felt, but the frequency of this screening is once a year, or every two years, if it is done at all.

### The Breast Self-Examination (B.S.E.)

The Breast Self-Examination (B.S.E.) is a combination of looking at and feeling the breasts, and is done by you. Unlike the frequency of the clinical exam and the mammography, this screening can be done whenever you want, most typically, every month. As you can see, the self-examination plays a central role in the early detection of disease because it is the most frequent screening. By doing it regularly you are, quite literally, taking responsibility for your breast health in your own hands.

The breast self-examination is a simple technique that just about anyone can perform. The object of it is, that through monthly practice you become so familiar with the usual geography of your breasts you'll quickly recognise any new or unusual change. If you do find something that is of concern, you can have your physician or health care professional evaluate it right away. However, before M.T.F.s conclude that they have little or nothing to worry about with regard to breast cancer, Dr. Kirk cautions that there are not enough long-term studies of breast disease in the M.T.F. population to dismiss the possibility of increased risk. B.S.E. can be considered a preventative health measure, along the lines of your regular dental checkups. The B.S.E. shouldn't be thought of as some grim procedure where you're on a search-and-destroy mission to find problems. For the M.T.F. it can be a pleasurable way of getting acquainted with your new body, a way to explore your breasts and be comfortable with them. They are, after all very tangible symbols of your feminine selves, and they should be a source of joy and pride! What better way to celebrate them than to take the time to check on their wellbeing.

The F.T.M. may take less pleasure in the B.S.E., but remember, your breasts are a part of you (albeit hopefully a temporary part), but as such, deserve proper care and attention.

No special equipment is needed to perform the breast self-examination other than a fairly large mirror and a pillow. It will also be necessary to have a warm, comfortable spot with good lighting, and without interruptions. Try to do the exam in the same place at the same time each month if possible; for example, prior to going to bed on each 15th of the month, or the last Sunday of every month. Before starting on your own program, you should have a complete clinical examination by your physician or health care professional. This way you'll begin with a clean slate, as it were, and establish a baseline condition on which to compare future self-exams.

A sample inventory might be for example, there is a small, brownish mole two inches under your left nipple; or a slightly lumpy feel of the upper right breast. (These will have been checked by your physician and found to be normal for you. In other words, you will have set a 'normal' condition for your breasts and you will then monitor any deviations from this condition.)

(A note to F.T.M.s who may still be menstruating. It is best to do the B.S.E. seven days after starting your period. Once the monthly cycle ceases, usually 3-6 months into the masculinising regimen, the B.S.E. can be performed at any time of the month)

## Second Puberty and other Considerations

For those who have recently started feminizing hormonal therapy, or who have changed to a different regimen, there may be spurts of breast growth in short periods of time, just as an adolescent girl might experience going through puberty. You will most likely have to adapt your B.S.E. accordingly. This may also apply after sex reassignment surgery is performed. Once again, if you have specific questions consult with your health care professional.

### Looking at the Breast

Take off your top and stand, or sit, in front of a mirror. Observe each breast for size and symmetry, texture and shape, skin colour, any moles or growths etc. Look at the nipple and the aureole (the coloured circle around the nipple). Raise both arms above your head and repeat the observations. Turn from side to side, observing the profiles. Tense your chest muscles by placing your hands on your hips and pressing in and again repeat the observations. Lean forward and look at the outline of each breast and nipple. Very gently squeeze each nipple and look for any discharge.

### Feeling the Breasts, lying down

Lay down. Put a pillow under your left shoulder and your left arm behind your head. With your right hand, using the pads of your



fingertips, feel your left breast. Make clockwise circles from the outer breast to the nipple or vice versa. Make up-and-down lines from top to bottom, or horizontal lines from side-to-side. Divide the breast into a clock-type pattern and work your way outward from the nipple with straight lines to each 'hour'. Or make up your own patterns. Just be sure you are thorough and that the whole breast is covered. Also, be consistent. Your finger tips will learn the topography of your breasts over time, and to change the patterns may send confused messages and make it impossible to judge from month to month. Use a combination of deep strokes, drawing the fingers over the breast to make sure you don't miss anything. If you are not sure what type of pressure to use, ask your health care professional. Feel along the armpit up to the collarbone for any swelling or enlarged lymph nodes. If the lymph nodes are swollen it could indicate a problem in the breast.

Move the pillow to under your right shoulder and place your right arm behind your head. Then use your left hand to repeat the process as for the right breast.

## Feeling the Breasts, the Wet Look

Many authorities also recommend that you repeat the feeling process while in the shower or bath, as your soapy fingertips will glide more easily over the skin.

Start by raising your right arm behind your head. With your left hand, soaped fingers held flat together, roll and press the breast firmly against the chest wall. Using a circular motion, feel a small portion of the breast at a time, until the entire breast area including armpit and chest area from collarbone to below the breast have been checked. Repeat using firmer pressure. Now repeat, raising your left arm and checking your left breast with your right hand.

## You're almost Finished

You're almost finished. The breast self-examination is as simple as that. With a little practice and repetition, you will become so familiar with the usual look and feel of your breasts that should anything unusual appear you can report it to your health care professional right away. But what should be considered 'unusual'? A lump, an inverted nipple, a discharge from a nipple, any swelling or dimpling of the skin, anything that wasn't there the last time you checked or that is of concern to you. Just keep in mind that if you do happen to discover something that deviates from the baseline you have established, the odds are that it will not turn out to be a serious problem or a cancer. But any questions you have, no matter how silly they may seem to you, should be discussed with your physician or health care professional. Only she or he can make a proper evaluation.

## The B.S.E. and Breast Augmentation

For those (M.T.F. or F.T.M.) who have undergone a breast augmentation procedure and have implants, the breast self-examination should still be performed on a regular basis. Though the exam may be a bit more difficult, depending on where the implants are placed, the principle is still the same. Through regular practice you'll get to know the normal condition of your augmented breasts, and quickly notice something out of the ordinary. Of course, you should follow any special instructions your surgeon or physician may have given you concerning implants and your self-exam.

## Other Health Concerns: Prostates and Pap Smears

A special note here to also remind Pre- and Post-Operative M.T.F. transsexuals of the fact that prostate cancer is the most common cancer in genetic males. Men and M.T.F.s over the age of fifty should have an annual health check-up that includes a prostate examination. Even after surgery it is important to have a periodic prostate examination, although it has been shown that after surgery and years of hormones the prostate decreases in size and no longer presents a danger.

These precautions can be very uncomfortable to follow through with, especially in view of the attitudes of many M.T.F.s concerning their unwanted body parts.

Similar feelings are experienced by F.T.M.s who need to continue periodic Pap smears. Perhaps F.T.M.s and M.T.F.s can take some comfort in the reasoning that going through transition and/or surgery is a wonderful step in the journey. Please take care of all of the parts to your body, wanted or not. How sad to be in the midst of the journey and to have it cut short by illness, or worse.

## Testicle Self-Examination (T.S.E.)

Earlier, we spoke to F.T.M.s about the necessity of taking care of their breast health even if they 'hated' them and hoped to have them removed. It would be remiss of us not to talk openly to M.T.F.s who still have their male genitals, whether they plan to keep them or have sex reassignment surgery. Genetic males who are pre-operative transsexual or transgendered, need to be aware of the Testicle Self-Examination (T.S.E.).

Have a complete physical examination with your health care professional to establish a baseline of normality. Check your testicles once a month in the shower or bathtub, soap up your hands, roll each testicle between your thumb and forefinger. Feel for hard lumps and bumps. If you notice a change or have aches or lumps, seek medical help right away so something can be done about it. If you are uncircumcised, you need to remember to keep the area under the foreskin clean to avoid infection.

## A Few Last Thoughts on Various Subjects

Like most things in life, taking responsibility for your breast and genital health is up to you. Learning the B.S.E. and B.S.E. and performing them monthly can not only give you peace of mind in knowing you're doing your part during your transsexual or transgendered journey. It can also save your life!

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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.