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Some Thoughts on Transition

And the Unnecessary Gatekeeping Imposed by the Sexual Reassignment Act 1988 (S.A.)

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A great weight was lifted from my shoulders and at the time came emotional completeness, the anger vanished ...

This is a brief account of my experiences involving the medical procedures concerning sexual reassignment and my thoughts about the *Sexual Reassignment Act 1988 (S.A.)*

... it wasn't until I faced and accepted my gender-identity that I started to find true happiness and peace within myself.

Having come to terms with the fact that I was a woman trapped in a male body, I approached my doctor at the beginning of 1996, with a view to begin the process of altering my body to suit the person living inside it. I knew that the treatment would consist of three main elements namely hormone therapy, counselling and finally surgery.

The surgical procedure I required was simply the removal of the testicles and excision of the scrotum. My sexual practices made the creation of a vagina

unnecessary. Why go to the expense of getting something that would never be used? The surgery I required would have three main benefits. Medical: I would not need to take large doses of hormones over a prolonged period. Psychological: I would be rid of the boy bits! Cosmetic: I would look anatomically correct when wearing jeans or tights. There would be no male bulges and this would give me a wider range of dress options.

With all these factors discussed with my doctor and wishing to make the transition in a proper manner, an appointment was made to see an endocrinologist. This occurred in March 1996 and was an absolute disaster! The endocrinologist was rude, told me he couldn't help me and if I wanted hormones, my doctor could prescribe them! I was devastated, went back to my doctor who was also shocked at my treatment, however my doctor filled out a prescription on the spot. From then on the medical treatment proceeded without any other problems. I consulted a psychiatrist in May 1996 with visits every four weeks until surgery, which took place in April 1997. The surgeon agreed to operate after I had been on hormone therapy for one year, provided that my psychiatric assessment was favourable. It was, and I am now an extremely happy woman enjoying a productive lifestyle in a way I had not thought possible. Words cannot adequately describe the improvement in my quality of life.

Now to the Sexual Reassignment Act, under this act only those medical practitioners duly authorised can carry out procedures in relation to Gender Reassignment. In my opinion this is discriminatory, since it means that a person with Gender Dysphoria is unable to choose the medical practitioner of choice. This is the only medical condition where this applies. I was forced to go outside the system because I was rebuffed by an authorised practitioner. Thanks to my medical people I was successful in getting treatment, but there are many people in a situation similar to myself who have been forced to see backyard treatment or go without. These are major health issues at stake, lives are at risk in some cases, i.e. suicide or the other side-effects of incorrect doses of medication (thrombosis). I believe that the act should be more inclusive and what constitutes reassignment procedures be clearly spelled out with people being able to have a choice of doctors etc.

Free at Last!

At last, after fifty years of unhappiness and self-loathing, I can look into the mirror and like what I see. I am now a complete person both psychologically and physically, a very happy woman who is relishing every moment of her new life. This happiness has not come without great cost however, two marriages, two families, several jobs, low self-esteem and years of searching for answers are just part of the price I have paid.

I am Transsexual, for years I was searching for answers as to why I felt so different. When I did discover who and what I was, I became so terrified I went into denial, doing absolutely ridiculous "blokey" things in the vain hope that it would all go away. Of course it didn't, the hiding behind beards, riding motorcycles, playing with guns and all the dangerous "macho" activities made not the slightest difference.

I explored sexuality, discovered that I am bisexual, but this was not the answer, and it wasn't until I faced and accepted my gender identity that I started to find true happiness and peace within myself. A great weight was lifted from my shoulders and at the time came

emotional completeness, the anger vanished, people came to me as friends, medical practitioners were supportive and as a result surgery took place on the 7th of April 1997, just sixteen months after the first consultation with my doctor.

This brief account is written in the hope that the parents and families of transsexuals can gain some insight into the emotional turmoil we go through on the journey of self-discovery. I have been asked if it was all worth it, the fear of ridicule, of appearing in public "dressed", the expense of medical treatment, the rejection of some people and refusal of others to acknowledge my identity. The answer to these questions is YES!

Finding oneself after wandering lost in the wilderness for so long more than compensates for the trauma.

I would urge all parents and families of transsexuals to study the subject of Gender Dysphoria before passing judgement. Remember, we did not choose to be transsexual, we were born that way. I have been a woman since birth, the only problem is that I was born with a male body, therefore the only solution was to alter that body to suit the person living in it. Some people find themselves early in life and make the transition when young, others such as myself agonise for years, but regardless of age, when the process of transition is done a better person emerges. So parents and friends, if you can understand that concept, I can guarantee that the positives will far outweigh the negatives.

If this article can assist in preserving and/or improving family relationship then I will be delighted!

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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.