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## The Well-Meaning, Misguided System

... is now hopefully largely in the past.

by Helen Ward

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Many of the oldies, like me, had to battle with a very structured and a sometimes well meaning if misguided system.

**I**t is encouraging to see authorities agreeing to requests with respect to gender reassignment at a young age. I take this to mean they, at long last, are starting to listen to what we have to say and what we think should be done rather than prescribing a solution based on misconceptions drawn from the available, but often misguided, expert literature.

***With better information earlier I probably could have arrived at the same conclusion while still in Primary School.***

Many of the oldies, like me, had to battle with a very structured and a sometimes well meaning if misguided system. We also learned to be somewhat cynical of most experts. "A drip under pressure" is often not far from the truth.

It is not so long ago that "Justice Ormrod" a supposedly knowledgeable Englishman with both medical and legal qualifications made recommendations that were acted on by the establishment following the "Corbett v Corbett" case. His judgement showed a total lack of understanding that could only result from proscribing rather than researching, listening and diagnosing.

Nearly all the advice that affected my actions positively came from my peers, not the establishment.

One of these days there may be a solution other than surgical intervention but I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for it to arrive. Without that intervention I would be either living as a man and an emotional cripple driven by compulsions that I could not control or living as a parody of a woman on the fringe of society. In either case almost certainly alienated from my family.

I have never been in doubt as to the efficacy of my gender related surgery any more than I have with respect to a hip and shoulder replacement. Given that these latter are to correct what is really worn cartilage suggests that a much less intrusive intervention is not too far away.

Again, however, it is not what may one day be available, but what is available now, that needs to be acted on. I could survive much more easily without my joint replacements than I could without reassignment surgery.

I would much prefer to be a physical cripple than an emotional one.

I was fifty before my then wife handed me a book by the current *Polare* editor and said "I think you should read this". On reading Kate's book it became crystal clear to me what my problem was.

It was not that I did not have an inkling of what was wrong before or that I had not read as much literature as was available over some forty years ... it was just that until that point I had doubts and had thought that the brain could control the rest of the body.

With better information earlier I probably could have arrived at the same conclusion while still in Primary School.

In a compassionate and informed environment, this understanding could, and should, be reached at a much earlier age. What age this should be is determined by the individual concerned (hopefully with the aid of a sympathetic family) and not at some preconceived age such as fifteen or eighteen. The earlier the better should be the rule as this results in fewer problems and lower costs for the person concerned and consequently avoids a string of problems and costs for society as well. There will be the occasional person who makes and later regrets such a decision. However people have to accept responsibility for their own mistakes and these should not stand in the way of the majority. Any protocol should be aimed at identifying these few mistaken cases, if possible.

To get where I am I had to follow a protocol that I found both demeaning and mostly irrelevant. But "hey" if it was the only way to get what I wanted, so be it. However when you and a group of friends, who are in the same position as you are, and cover a wide spectrum of society including academics who are highly credentialed in their own field are all agreeing that it is unnecessary, you do wonder at the misguided logic that created the protocol in the first place.

I think of the confusion my forays into my mother's and sister's clothes from almost the beginnings of my memory caused both me and my family, and the added confusion during puberty when it appeared to be related to ejaculation, the early years of university when fear of going into department stores resulted in my stealing from clothes lines and eventually from houses. This last activity finally resulted in my facing court, being made subject to probation, and undergoing counselling that was irrelevant to my true situation. I still cringe when I remember the times when I tried to sew up my own genitals with a needle and thread as well as a number of other stupid practices that would add little to the thrust of this article.

Then came the erroneous thinking that a marriage which was more successful than most would put an end to my problems. Finally, when I had no doubt as to the nature and solution to my problems, my marriage, like many others, foundered on the gender perceptions of my partner. Fortunately for me the parting was less acrimonious than most. However my ex-partner did suffer a not inconsiderable degree of angst and was of the opinion (which is hard to contest) that I should have known myself better.

As I had reached a mature age the cost of transition was considerable. First there was a separation, then divorce and splitting of assets. Breaking the news to two adult children, one at university and one returned from a year overseas; breaking the news to close friends including a business partner and then the decision that if I was going to go ahead it would not be in my own backyard.

I did not believe that I would be very successful in what I was attempting so I did not want to be a further embarrassment to those I loved. I used to think I would wind up destitute, living in an attic on Flinders Street (Sydney) and be an object of amusement for small children. To my surprise however, my transition has gone relatively smoothly. I do envy the younger generation who will not have to endure hours of painful and costly electrolysis, hours of costly psychiatric counselling (in my case mitigated by a sympathetic and humorous psychiatrist who realised that there was nothing that he could do to help me).

And a few minor cosmetic operations (which in hindsight were probably unnecessary). The only intervention for which I was grateful was speech pathology at R.P.A. but again for a younger person before puberty this would not be necessary.

I do not consider that my life would necessarily have been better if I had had gender reassignment at an earlier age but I do know that if I had had better information available to me I probably would have wanted to have the change before I started high school.

The misguided logic that has led to many following a path such as mine is now hopefully largely in the past.

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