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Naturalisation Certificate

How to Amend Post-Operatively

by Kate Cummings

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Katherine Cummings: Under no circumstances, I was told, would I be issued with a revised Naturalisation Certificate ...

I was born in Scotland and naturalised as Australian in 1974. After I transitioned from male-to-female in 1986 I set about changing all my official and non-official documentation, and had no problems with items such as degrees, diplomas, memberships in professional societies, credit cards, Medicare, Medibank, driving licence and so on. Some organisations, including my universities both here and in Canada required a payment and the return of the original documents, but made no fuss about replacing the testamurs after I produced statutory declarations of my gender change. Even obtaining new British and Australian passports was no problem, although the Australian Immigration Department required a letter from my surgeon to the effect that I have had irreversible gender change surgery before issuing me with my new passport. And when the new passport arrived it was accompanied by a letter emphasising that my new passport was only an administrative device to save me embarrassment while travelling, but my legal gender was unchanged and any attempt to marry in my gender of choice would result in a null and void marriage, and possibly a gaol term and/or fine!

So it is now possible for any post-operative transsexual with a Naturalisation Certificate in his or her former name to obtain a corrected certificate.

When I came to revise my Naturalisation Certificate, however, which is also issued by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs I ran into a blank wall. Under no circumstances, I was told, would I be issued with a revised Naturalisation Certificate,

despite the fact that I sometimes need to prove my citizenship when applying for new positions, and production of my old certificate was not only at variance with all my other documentation, but would also deprive me of any privacy concerning my former status.

Time and again I approached the officers of the Department but I always received the same refusal.

Finally I decided enough was enough and wrote to the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Senator Bolkus, pointing out the anomaly between the situation regarding Naturalisation Certificates and Passports, and suggesting that the current policy of the Department probably contravened article 12 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his [sic] privacy ...").

Two months passed and I had just posted a follow-up letter, as well as one to my local Federal Member of Parliament, recruiting her support, when I received a letter from a Senior Advisor to Senator Bolkus which said, inter alia, that "it is acknowledged ... that the current policy guidelines do not adequately advise decision makers of their obligation to consider the circumstances of each case ... In circumstances such as yours, amendment of the certificate is warranted. The Department is currently revising policy guidelines to this effect."

The terms imposed for replacement of the certificate are similar to those for a passport, namely the return of the original certificate, a statement from the surgeon attesting to the irreversible nature of the surgery and certified copies of the deed poll document and other documents showing current name. In fact I do not have a deed poll since I chose to change my name "by reputation", but I sent off my application with my existing certificate and a number of certified documents attesting to my current name and a week or so ago I received my new Naturalisation Certificate showing my name to be Katherine Fiona Cummings.

So it is now possible for any post-operative transsexual with a Naturalisation Certificate in his or her former name to obtain a corrected certificate.

If any resistance is encountered, I suggest a reference to the letter of Bronwyn McNaughton, Senior Adviser to the Minister, dated 28th April 1995 and addressed to me, Katherine Cummings.

Now I have set out to have my document revised ... my birth certificate. Since this was issued in Scotland and United Kingdom still follows Corbett versus Corbett with pig-headed single mindedness and prejudiced bigotry I have no high hopes of success ... but it won't stop me from trying!

Katherine Cummings

Katherine Cummings is a writer and transgender activist, currently working at the N.S.W. Gender Centre as Librarian and Information Worker. Her autobiography, *Katherine's Diary*, based on a two-year series of radio talks she gave on Radio National's "Health Report", won the Australian Human Rights Award for Non-Fiction in 1992. It has since been expanded and updated and was re-issued at the end of 2007.



Katherine edits *Polare*, the quarterly magazine of the Gender Centre and writes for it. She is currently putting together a collection of her essays, short stories, poems and book reviews to be published in mid-2013 under the title *The Life and Loves of a Transgender Woman*.

Katherine transitioned in 1986 at the age of fifty-one.



The Life and Loves of a Transgendered Lesbian Librarian

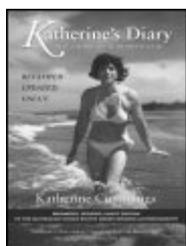
Author: Katherine Cummings

Publisher: Beaujon Press (2014)

I.S.B.N.-13: 978-098036535X

From Polare Magazine Review: The publication of this collection is a timely reminder that there is still a lot to learn about gender identity, its causes, aetiology and expression. To redress common misconceptions, prejudices, and targeted violence, ethically focussed education is critical. Of overriding importance is the acknowledgment of the truth of all 'real-life' experiences and within this framework Katherine's lifetime experience, retold through cleverly assembled vignettes (essays,

book reviews, verses and poems), is central. The book's content is varied and provides the reader with decisive personal viewpoints centred on the paramount issue of gender identity.



Katherine's Diary: Revamped, Updated, Uncut Edition

Author: Katherine Cummings

Publisher: BookSurge Publishing (2008)

I.S.B.N.-13: 978-1439215456

From Bookpod Book Store website: "I think that I was irrational, even insane, at the time. My transsexualism had taken hold of me with such obsessive force that I could not concentrate on anything else. There I was, a fifty-year-old professional academic librarian who had desperately wanted to be female ever since memories began ..." In 1986 John Cummings became Katherine Cummings and a whole life changed. In this painfully honest account of John's transformation into

a woman, Katherine tells of years of fantasising behind locked doors, of the betrayal felt by her family and the final relief of surgery. Katherine's Diary covers a lifetime of self-discovery and self-destruction told with acerbic wit and crisp observation.

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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.