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A Response from the Australian Democrats

... to Comments Regarding their Position on a Range of Transgender Issues.

by Brian Greig

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Issues

I write in response to comments and letters in the last issue of *Polare* (Edition 57) regarding the Australian Democrats' position on a range of issues for transgender people. Let me begin by assuring your readers that the comments attributed to Democrats' staff member Sarah Benson, are not an accurate reflection of Democrats' policy, and do not properly reflect the official action undertaken by us in relation to the current review of the Monash Gender Clinic.

The Democrats policy in this area is unambiguous. We support full equality in all areas of law for sexuality and gender minorities ...

There have been several approaches to Senator Lyn Allison by a number of groups seeking a review of Monash procedures, especially in relation to follow-up care. As a consequence of initial concerns raised by GenderMenders/G.I.A.A., Senator Allison gave cautious support for a review of

Monash late last year.

In the time since, there have been many more voices contributing to debate on this issue, particularly after the recent Family Court ruling in the case of Alex.

I have publicly stated the Democrats' view that many of these voices are fronts for the Catholic Church and other conservative organisations, and that their allegiances must be declared. As is often the risk, those with little information and highly questionable motives have attempted to take the debate from those with a legitimate claim to it.

As the Democrats' spokesperson for Sexuality and Gender Issues, let me state categorically that while we endorse support for transgender people who later regret their decision for surgery, we do not believe the few cases in which this has occurred should be grounds upon which to discredit the Monash Clinic.

We acknowledge the enormity of the struggle for many people with gender identity issues, both in coming to terms with that identity, and then for those who choose it, in going through the various stages of operative and non-operative therapies that will assist to bring congruence between identity and daily experience.

We recognise, too, that these choices often come at enormous personal, emotional, psychological and financial cost.

The Democrats policy in this area is unambiguous. We support full equality in all areas of law for sexuality and gender minorities, funding of support services, access to information, full gender affirmation, availability of treatments under Medicare, and removal of gender categories on all official documents.

You may be aware I sought additional information from Victorian Health Minister, Bronwyn Pike, in March/April regarding the nature, conduct and time-frame of the Monash review, and whether its result would be made available for public comment.

Minister Pike responded this week by saying that the review would be privately conducted by a small team of senior mental health clinicians later this month, with particular focus on referral, assessment and decision making processes.

The Minister has also advised the Clinic will be evaluated against "generally accepted contemporary practice for this area of clinical speciality", and that the review is occurring in line with the recommendations of the Victorian L.G.B.T.I. Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, developed through ongoing community consultation.

Finally, Minister Pike advises that while the final report will be confidential, general findings may be released at the discretion of the Chief Psychiatrist and Director of Mental Health.

The Australian Democrats recognise the level of concern that exists in relation to this review, particularly given much of the sensational media accompanying the Alex case, and we continue to monitor the development of the issue.

We are committed to our proud history of supporting L.G.B.T.I. communities well beyond that of any other party, and in ensuring the rights of all Australians, regardless of sexuality or gender identity.

Brian Greig

From Wikipedia:  Representing the state of Western Australia, Brian Greig O.A.M. was an Australian Democrats Senator, elected in 1998 and serving between 1999 and 2005. While in university he helped re-establish the National Union of Students and began to get involved in gay rights activism, helping to establish the now defunct Australian Council for Lesbian and Gay Rights. He declared his homosexuality in his maiden parliamentary speech, being the first Federal parliamentarian to do so. In the Senate, Greig was responsible for introducing three pieces of legislation including a bill to outlaw genocide in Australia and a bill to eliminate discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. All three were unsuccessful, as they were blocked by the Liberal-National government.



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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.