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The Emerging Needs of Gender Centre Clients

Introducing the Gender-Queer Support Group

by Anthony Carlino

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Gender Centre Counsellor, Anthony Carlino: One of the more recent trends is the increasing number of people seeking support for their gender-queer identities

Having just pushed past four years as the Gender Centre Counsellor (has it really been that long?) and being privileged to support so many wonderful people, I have noticed some changes in the individuals who use the service and the ways in which they identify.

Gender-queer is a catch-all term most often used for those who feel that their gender identities do not fit into the socially constructed 'norms' associated with their biological sex.

From the large increase in the number of young people confident enough to openly define themselves as transgender, and the increase in families who are already very well-informed and supportive of their loved ones' transitions, there can be little doubt in my mind that the changes reflect a growing understanding and acceptance of gender variance by society.

One of the more recent trends is the increasing number of people seeking support for their gender-queer identities. Gender-queer is a catch-all term most often used for those who feel that their gender identities do not fit into the socially constructed 'norms' associated with their biological sex.

I frequently encounter discussion topics from these individuals concerning the unique needs and issues of this group, which often differ from those who identify more neatly into binary notions of gender. A brief summation of some of these topics is: [1] There is an ongoing lack of awareness about gender-queer issues from medical practitioners that often results in gender-queer people being treated with prejudice due to misconceptions. This, in turn,

affects the quality of medical services provided and can include increased resistance to their seeking hormone replacement therapy if the medical staff concerned accept and understand the existence of only binary transgendered people. [2] Societal lack of awareness with regard to gender-queer people, including accusations of non-existence. This can result in gender-queer individuals feeling compelled to fit within binary gender categories and this can subsequently cause great distress. [3] The unique challenges presented by existing as a minority within a minority, including transphobic views held by cisgendered and transgendered people. [4] A lack of research on gender-queer people, which makes it difficult to identify clearly the needs of this community.

These are only a few of the challenges faced by gender-queer people. The Gender Centre has recognised the needs of this group as important and notes the emergence of these needs as more and more people come to accept their gender non-conformity.

For that reason, I am proud to announce that on 2 March 2015 the Gender Centre started a monthly Gender-Queer Support Group. Please contact the Gender Centre on 9519 7599 for details.

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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.