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Family Love

norrie's Trip to Melbourne

by norrie mAy-welby

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norrie mAy-welby

I visited Melbourne earlier this year, and decided to pop in on my aunt and cousins while I was there. I hadn't seen them in over twenty years, since I was a little boy (and yes, whatever my gender is now, I was a little boy then. I checked this often enough with the little boy who lived next door. But I digress).

I am indeed blessed in having a family that values acceptance so highly.

I rang them and introduced myself as "norrie, Marion's child. You knew me as Bruce." On my way to visit them, I realised that they had no idea what to expect of me gender wise. I was dressed in bright multi-coloured androgynous fashion, as was my wont, devoid of gender signifiers. They may have been homophobic for all I knew. Oh well, they can take me as they find me, I thought.

I was actually given a very warm welcome, arriving during the weekly gathering of the extended family, and being greeted by my aunt, uncle and my cousins and their partners and children. I hadn't seen my cousin Helen since I'd gotten into trouble for playing with her doll when I was four. I was able to talk about transgender issues when they asked about my work. (I was temping for the Gender Centre, and had an acting job as a transgender character). I talked about my understanding of sex and gender in a broad societal sense, and continued this discussion late into the night with my aunt Jean and cousin Diane and her partner. I accepted Jean's invitation to sleep in their guest room that night.

I was given a fond farewell the next morning, still not sure if they thought I was Arthur or Martha, but comfortable that this was not an issue for them.

About a month later, I rang Jean to get my cousin's address and to thank them for their hospitality. (I note my tendency to refer to my family collectively, but that's the way they often work.) She mentioned that the family had seen my appearance on Sex/Life, and congratulated me on my presentation. I was a little thrown out that they could so easily accept me being known on national television as a transgender prostitute. "Family is family", said Jean, "You are the way you are and that's that." It turned out she'd known about my changing gender since my uncle had mentioned it to her years ago (back when I identified my gender as exclusively female). I was surprised at this acceptance, for their background is simple working class Protestant, non-university education intellectual liberal. But to them, and to almost all of my relatives, family is about acceptance.

Thank Goddess for this too, for I hadn't thought through the possible consequences of the television appearance. My father hadn't known I was a prostitute till this was revealed on Sex/Life. "I hope this was a while ago", he said. It seems he can deal with it better if it's past tense. Nevertheless, I realised that even when they might disapprove of what I do, rejecting me is not an option they even consider.

My parents even tried hard to always use feminine pronouns when I thought this was important to me. And because we've stayed close, I've been able to discuss with them my evolving views of gender, sex and society. I've talked with my parents about where they don't fit rigid gender roles, discussed gender fluidity, and how my own identity has changed in light of this. Now that my identity is spansexual, my family sometimes calls me he, sometimes she, and that's the way I like it.

I know of many transgender people who are estranged from their family, or who hide their transgendered nature from them. I am indeed blessed in having a family that values acceptance so highly.

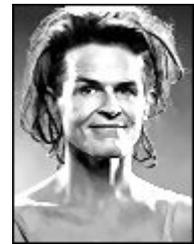
I talked to my mum about this a short time ago, when we were discussing how parents could be helped to deal with transgender children. "You love your children," she said, "you may try to change them when they're growing up, but after a time, there's nothing you can do but accept the way they are. You may not always understand them, but you accept them."

I am grateful to be part of a family that values love so highly, and awed by love's simple power.

norrie mAy-welby



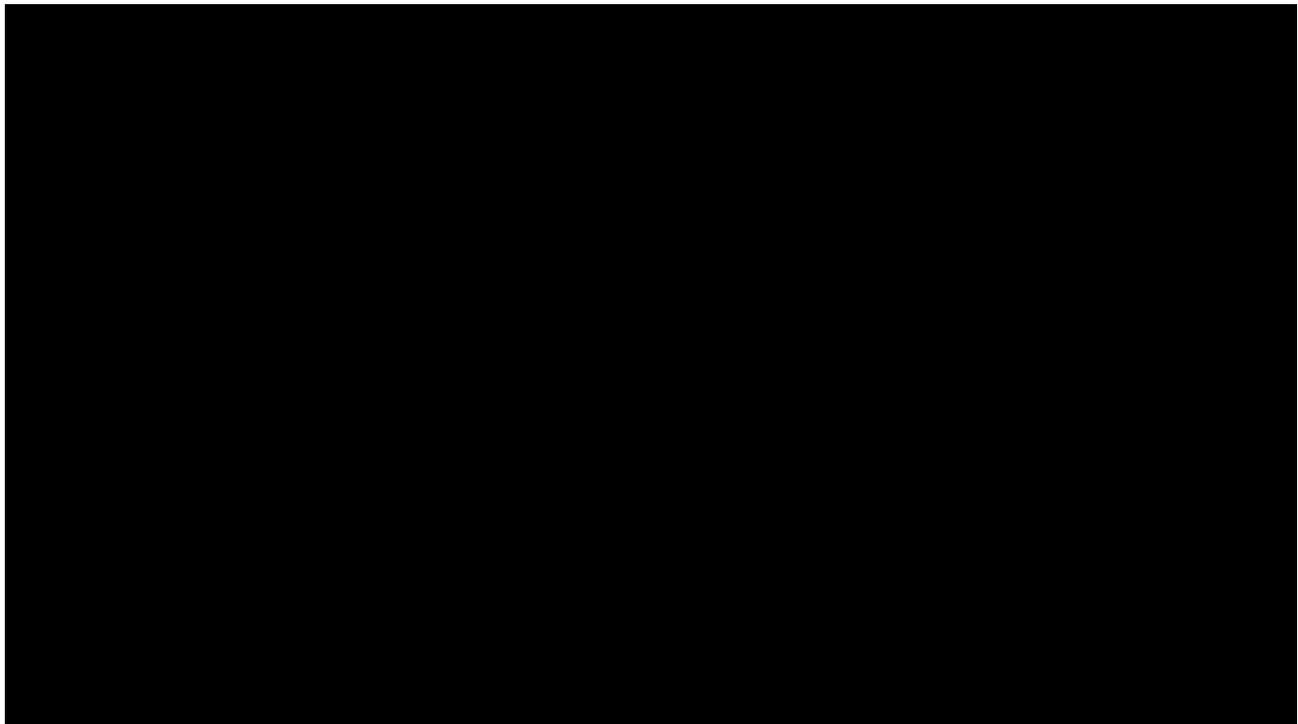
From [Wikipedia](#) norrie mAy-welby became the first person in the world to be officially declared to be neither a man nor a woman, making Australia the first country in the world to recognise a "non-specified" gender.



Born in Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland, as a male and moving to Perth, Western Australia at the age of seven, norrie underwent male-to-female reassignment surgery in 1989, but later found that being a woman was not what zie felt like either. Zie moved to Sydney in the early 1990s. Doctors stated, in January 2010, that norrie was a neuter, neither male nor female, as hir psychological self-image was as a neuter, hir hormones were not the same as a male's or female's, and zie had no sex organs.

One of hir worries about being labelled male or female is that zie now looks like neither and is physically neither as well. Because of this, if hir passport states gender as being one or the other, it is possible that zie might be detained for not fitting what the gender field says zie should look like. This was one of norrie's reasons for seeking recognition as gender neutral. Of hir own sexuality, norrie has stated: "I'd be the perfect androgyne if I was completely omnisexual, but I'm only monosexual. Just think of me as a big queen girl."

norrie has been an integral part of the Gender Centre in many ways since moving from Western Australia many years ago. [Visit hir website for more about norrie](#)  Meanwhile, this excellent video has appeared on You Tube, an interview with norrie in which zie explains her views on many topics



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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.