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Almost Heaven: My Vagina

In Search of Non-Judgemental Health Care

norrie mAy-welby

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I just wanted to pass on a recent experience I had with health providers, as someone with a neo-vagina that needed medical attention. I

noticed I was 'spotting' that is, bleeding slightly from the vulva (is my doggy background showing here?), and became worried. I delayed going to a doctor immediately, for I feared that a G.P. wouldn't know how to deal with my surgically constructed part. I worried about it, and after about half an hour, I resolved to seek immediate medical attention if I was still spotting. I found that I was, and went to the local late night medical centre.

... the nurses had moral objections to giving men vaginas. I felt too vulnerable to ask if she shared their bigotry.

The old male doctor there briefly examined me, announced that the bleeding was from an external growth, and referred me to a gynaecologist. I wanted to be referred to a female gynaecologist, but he could only find men. I asked for a generic referral letter, and undertook to find a female gynaecologist myself.

Of course, having a gender identity somewhere between girly male and a tomboy, I was somewhat embarrassed about having to buy some panty liners

and ladies underwear. It took a determined effort to find some pants that fit the shape of my undercarriage without making a ridiculous statement with frills and flowers.

I spent the next morning at the Gender Centre trying to find a female gynaecologist, preferably with some knowledge of neo-vaginas. I had no luck in this last requirement, but I eventually made an appointment with a woman.

I told her I was transgender when I went in to see her. She said she had worked in a hospital where they had performed the surgery I'd had, but they had stopped because the nurses had moral objections to giving men vaginas. I felt too vulnerable to ask if she shared their bigotry. Regardless of the moral rightness or wrongness of my having surgery, it was a done thing, and I now needed medical attention.

She examined me, and told me there were more growths inside the vagina. She told me I'd need surgery to remove them, but this couldn't be done for several months. I left feeling as if my vagina was an open festering sore, a contagious leprosy I'd have to bear for months. For this I was given a bill for fifty dollars.

The more I reflected on her comments about moral condemnation of transgender genital restructure surgery, the more uneasy I was. If she didn't share the moral approbation she'd mentioned, wouldn't she have pointed this out? It was like someone saying, "I know someone who thinks people like you should be shot", without saying, "Of course I don't think that way."

I decided to try other options and went in to Sydney Sexual Health Centre the next day. After a wait of an hour or so, I was seen by a male doctor who was very pleasant and non-judgmental, accepted my explanation of my problem and treated me right there and then.

There was no charge to me, and I didn't even need my Medicare card.

In future, I won't worry about whether my gynaecological care is from a man or woman, but from a service I know to be non-judgmental, and as a bonus, more effective and efficient.

While this disease has been a bit yucky, there's also the sobering thought that I may have, caught something much worse and less curable. I'll count this a serious warning, and close escape. I have to be more vigilant in avoiding unprotected sex, and change my attitudes that lead to trying to get physical intimacy in lieu of emotional safety.

It's also had a major effect on how I see my transgendered physique.

I have been very offhand or ambivalent about having a neo-vagina, and during this incident I realised some bad aspects and some good aspects. The bad aspects were the fear that I couldn't find a doctor who'd know how to treat me, and the fear of medical

discrimination when and where I'm most vulnerable. The later fear perhaps even manifested, but I found ways around these things. The good aspect was realising that if I didn't have a vagina, I would still have had the infection, and it would've been in a place that would've been a lot more difficult, painful and unpleasant to treat.

So I'm a little less ambivalent now, and thank heaven for my vagina!

norrie mAy-welby

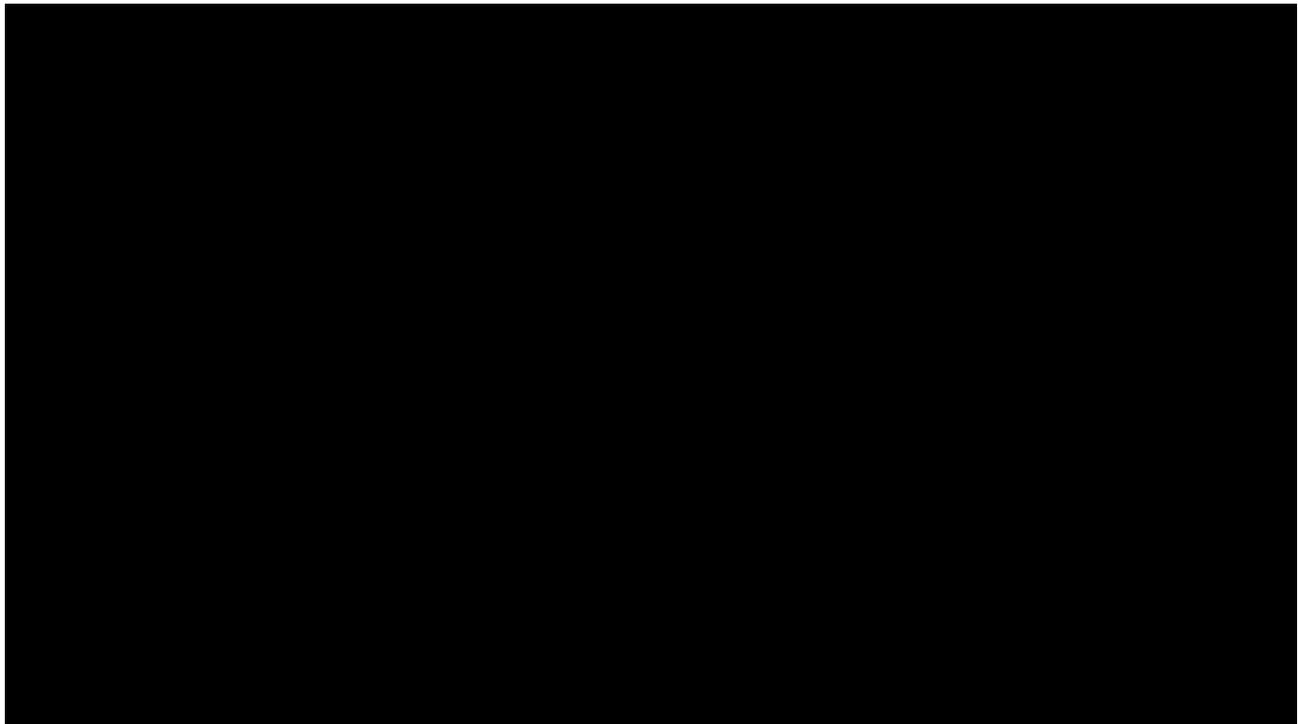
From [Wikipedia](#)  norrie mAy-welby became the first person in the world to be officially declared to be neither a man nor a woman, making Australia the first country in the world to recognise a "non-specified" gender.



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 omniseual, but I'm only monoseual. 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.