

The Committee Secretary,  
Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

Thank you for inviting submissions from the public regarding the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

I am writing because I am very concerned about the potential impact of this proposed legislation.

My concern is that this legislation would not recognise the well-documented contribution of psychological therapy to the mental health of a child or adolescent with gender dysphoria. While not a guaranteed way to manage all young people with gender dysphoria it is beneficial for a proportion and avoids the need for long term hormone administration and in some cases major surgery, including castration.

There is good evidence about the side effects on the brain of blocking puberty and the administration of cross sex hormones . This evidence does not appear not to be recognised by proponents for their use.

Even some proponents for hormonal intervention admit to lack of knowledge of the outcome of their intervention. A salutary fact is that the suicide rate in adults who are in the process of changing gender is some twenty times higher than the general population. While some of this may be due to harsh and unsympathetic public attitudes, this does not account for a 20 fold increase.

Because of the data about deleterious side effects of hormonal therapy in some cases, I write to request the Parliament not to oblige therapists to pursue the hormonal intervention as the only form of intervention and to permit psychotherapeutic support for selected cases, as this has been shown to be effective.

Gender dysphoria is a real condition. As a paediatrician, I am deeply committed to good mental health and physical in all children, including families where gender dysphoria occurs.

I thank the Parliament for its concern about the welfare of children with gender dysphoria but wish to register my strong disagreement with its commitment to the claims of benefit from the life-long administration of large doses of hormones and the possibility of serious surgery.

Sincerely

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Emeritus Professor

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