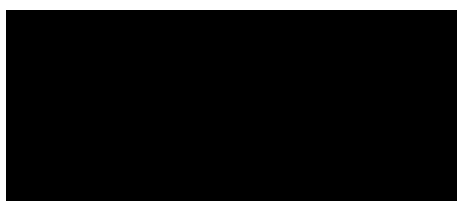


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Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2018

It is reasonable to think that members of this Committee may be confronted or challenged by the idea of amending the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003 (Act) to accommodate a more fluid approach to sex and gender identity. A reaction like that would not be surprising when gender non-conformity has often been dealt with in secrecy, it has more often than not been treated as an embarrassment and something to be hidden away or quietly dealt with in isolation by way of painful and risky medical procedures, self-medication, self-harm and even suicide.

There is nothing quite like that feeling of having a child, in hospital and close to death. Nothing can prepare you for it. Any parent who has ever experienced this will tell you they would do anything to make things right, to fix the problem so that their child can go on and live life to the fullest with as little pain as possible.

When you are the parent of a transgender child, or a child experiencing gender dysphoria, the chance that you will be the one sitting by the hospital bed hoping they will live through the night is all the higher. I am sad to say that this is my family's story. Watching my child suffer has been heartbreaking. But we consider ourselves lucky because my child, now eighteen years, survived. Surrounded by a family and community full of love and support, my child survived despite the prejudice that exists within our systems and practices.

It is my hope is that you will see beyond existing prejudice and long-held black and white beliefs around sex and gender and see this as an opportunity to help bring some peace to a small group of people trying to live their lives authentically. The changes to the Bill that I am proposing here would go some small way to ease the burden on those most at risk, and their families, and ultimately help save lives.

Proposed changes

1. I support the proposed amendment to remove restrictions in Part 4 Section 22 of the Act so that it no longer requires a married person to divorce before they are able to change their legal sex on their birth or adoption certificates.

2. I also seek further changes to the Part 4, Sections 22 and 23 of the Act, through the Amendment Bill 2018, similar to legislation in South Australia, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, so that the Act no longer requires costly, and potentially life-threatening surgical intervention for people to legally change their sex on their birth or adoption certificates.

Rather than surgery being the requirement to change your registered sex or gender identity, like South Australia, the Act should instead only reference 'clinical treatment', which may or may not involve invasive medical treatment and could include or be constituted by counselling and substantiated by a statement provided in support of the application by a doctor or psychologist stating the applicant has received an appropriate amount of clinical treatment in regard to their gender or sexual identity.

It goes to follow that changes should also be made to the Act that enable new parents to record their own gender or sexual identity, as mother and/or father, on their child's birth or adoption certificate.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss this further, and I ask that all identifying information be removed before publishing.

Kind regards

