

Submission on the Anti-Discrimination (Right to Use Gender-Specific Language) Amendment Bill 2018

This bill and the language Mr Katter uses to describe it, is a disingenuous ploy, straight from the conservative victimhood playbook that appeals to fear and ignorance based on misinformation. Much like there is no war on families from the gays and lesbians, there's no war on Christmas from the atheists or non-Christian religious, there is no attack on gendered terms by trans people or the lefty boogiemans.

Socially regressive conservatives in the western world are overtly attempting to wind back civil rights and protections that sex and gender diverse people have fought hard to achieve. Recently with President Trump trying to legislate trans people out of existence seems to have emboldened similarly opinioned lay people in our political sphere in Australia and Queensland.

The peer reviewed science confirms that sex, and gender identity are not and never have been binary. Society at large is yet to catch up. In a small part of the population sex or gender might not match up like most people, or may be variant in some way. I find it sad that I have to explain this to my state parliament, because there is no requirement for overpaid elected "representatives" to adhere to and apply evidence in their creation of legislation.

The reality is that intersex people exist and are not catered to by Births, Deaths and Marriages from the moment they are born. It is also a reality that trans people exist, they too are reluctantly obliged by Births, Deaths and Marriages, with caveats of requiring expensive surgeries that are demanded by the state and not funded by the commonwealth. The UN and the AHRC have been calling on all levels of Australian government to remedy these systems to give basic rights to people that they currently don't have, lack of these rights put them in danger and strip people of dignity. It is also a constant reminder that you are 'the other' and all the hateful rhetoric that goes with that is associated with your identity documents that you can't obtain because of the incompetence of our elected representatives. This is somewhat of a side issue that is supposedly being dealt with this year, however, when you can't even have the basics sorted, having people take away your right to self-determination and dignity by way of having bigots pick and choose what gender to address you as is demoralising and dangerous.

Socially regressive, conservative minded people in our society refuse to accept that science has evolved past what they think they vaguely remember from school. As a result, just existing as a sex or gender diverse person means that any interaction you have, can turn sour as your status comes up and suddenly there you are in a public online forum or in person with people watching on, living, being treated as and having an identity and a name that matches your gender identity, then the next minute some ignorant person is publicly vilifying you by calling you the opposite pronoun on purpose, or some other derogatory term based on pronouns. For a vulnerable population this could ruin your day, week, month, or tar an event or a location for ever. It could be the final straw before someone takes their own life.

I live this every day of my life as do others. I am yet to speak to anyone who hasn't experienced some kind of discrimination or vilification or both under our current state law. The majority don't follow it up with the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland though as the onus is on the individual to do so. I drew a line in the sand and after that point have taken half a dozen people to Anti-Discrimination commissions over public vilification online and in person in just over a year. They're only the identifiable ones, or ones who live in a state that has vilification on gender grounds as a protected status. What this bill is aiming to do is to not only make vilification legal, but encourage it. It shouldn't be happening now, but it is, and the vast majority take the multiple hits and go on with their lives just adding a psychological cut or bruise without it being acknowledged or dealt with by anyone.

This bill deserves to be exposed for what it is. It is an appeal to ignorance and an attempt to drag society backwards away from acceptance of diversity. It is a bill that attempts to legitimise hurtful vilification of vulnerable people who still have far too many social and legal hurdles in the way of living their lives in peace and dignity. That it is even being introduced in to our parliament is a sad statement on the state of our parliament and its elected members.

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