

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill 2022

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Submitter Comments:

The implications of this bill for women and girls cannot be understated. Such legislation will effectively allow men to self-identify into female-only activities, spaces and services, including sports, prisons, bathrooms, and refuges. But women's relative physical vulnerability and male patterns of criminality do not dissipate simply because of a piece of paper. Indeed, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls has recently highlighted the potential for sexual predators to abuse such laws. In addition to research showing that 'trans women' retain male patterns of criminality, examples of women being harmed by them in (what should be) women-only spaces abound. In the last year, stories have come to light of 'trans women' raping women in women-only prisons, hospital wards and shelters. That is not to say that all trans-identified males are rapists. They are clearly not. The reality, however, is that males are much more likely to be the perpetrators of sexual violence and females are far more likely to be victims. This does not change because the male perpetrator happens to be transgender. Gender identities do not rape women, male bodies do. In addition to the erosion of sex-based rights for women and girls, the bill also erodes safeguards for children. Children and adolescents presenting with gender dysphoria often have a history of childhood trauma, family dysfunction and sexual abuse, as well as comorbid mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, behaviour disorders and autism. Rather than addressing these unresolved issues, the legislation will allow young people to concretise a transgender identity by legally changing their sex, encouraging them further down a process of 'transitioning', which has been proven to cause serious harm. The bill also pits children against their parents and parents against one another by allowing children under 16 to change their registered sex with the permission of one parent only, or without any parental permission at all in certain circumstances. Finally, the bill seeks to repeal s28 of the Anti-Discrimination Act, which provides that it is not unlawful to discriminate on the basis of gender identity in work involving the care or instruction of minors, in order to protect their wellbeing. This would see the removal of protections against trans-identified males working in organisations like Girl Guides and for example, sharing accommodation and changing facilities with young girls. In addition to the harms posed to women and children, the legislation puts at risk the freedom of speech and conscience of all Queenslanders who, for example, may not be comfortable calling a man a woman and treating him as such. What repercussions will ordinary Queenslanders face, if they decide to choose reality, and refuse to acknowledge a person's 'self-identified sex', whether in language or practice? Almost more concerning than the bill itself, has been the concerted effort to ignore and silence women and members of the community who oppose the legislation. For example, by introducing the bill in December and making submissions due during the holiday period, many Queenslanders will not have the opportunity to have their voices heard by the committee. Women's advocates and groups have also been refused meetings to discuss their concerns and have been blocked on email and social media by the Minister. The bill elevates gender identity over biological reality, women's and children's safety, and common sense. It is nothing less than a betrayal of women and girls, by the one Minister who is tasked with protecting their interests and wellbeing.