

Submission to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee
On the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Bill 2022.

Parliament of Queensland.
Legal Affairs and Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

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To the Secretary, and whom it may concern,

Amidst grotesque, cruel perceptions of what it means to ‘self-identify’, propagated through media cycles and hateful lobby groups, the **action of ‘self-identification’ is critically lifesaving**. In our daily lives, there are many ways we self-identify, like the use of endearing pet-names, like the adoption of roles as friends, family, pet-parents, and as occupations – like students, teachers, doctors, nurses, and more. Self-identification, of any kind, of a person as their own identity, and as membership of a group, is an assertion of our independence – it is a powerful assertion that we are the experts of our own lives, and our names, genders, identities and expressions, and families, are foremost our very own.

In such light, the *Births, Deaths, and Marriages Registration Regulation (2022)* comes at an important time. My **support for this Bill comes from my lived experience of being gender-diverse, as well as from many years of research and advocacy in the LGBTQIA+ policy sector**. Originally from India, where the ability to identify as trans and/or gender-diverse requires affirmative surgery, and an invasive ‘verification process’ by a court magistrate, the ability to self-identify my gender in Victoria is significantly empowering for my mental, physical, and social wellbeing. **A medical transition, which many trans and gender-diverse people choose not to do, does not make us more or less trans.**

Moreover, the diversity of a person’s being is beyond its physical appearance and pathological diagnosis – we are people with stories and lives worth living that reflect the realities of how we experience ourselves. For many trans and gender-diverse people who choose to access medical transition, it is only a part of the process of the social acceptance of ourselves, and a more easily accessible social transition through names, pronouns and gender identities, will only make the process easier on the our lives that are already marked with disproportionately high rates of poor mental health, economic marginalisation, and social exclusion.

Being able to self-identify one’s gender, with affirmation from an adult who has known us for 12+ months, is an acknowledgement of our experience as people, and a respect for the agency we should have over our lives. It is a right as immovable as the act of being human itself – that we are seen for who we are, and should we have estranged relationships with biological family, an unfortunate reality for many trans and gender-diverse people, we are able to choose any adult to affirm our statutory declaration.

Non-binary people, such as myself, and intersex people (people born with variations in sex characteristics) **often have to undergo non-consensual procedures, or hide our**

identities (and risk being outed in schools, workplaces, hospitals) to neatly fit into the current options of 'gender' on birth certificates and forms. The new Bill, as it becomes law, would allow Queenslanders to write in their own gender on their birth certificate – once again, **an assertion of social, political, and economic independence that should be the right of every human.**

On a more personal note, there are numerous studies that show that trans and gender-diverse people whose identification documents match their gender and their name, are more likely to experience better mental health outcomes (Forbes 2020). I work in the LGBTQIA+ mental health and suicide prevention sector, and through my work, I am acutely aware that the community has one of the highest rates of suicide – with about 30.3% of LGBTQIA+ people attempting suicide across their lifetimes, according to the La Trobe University Private Lives National Report. As someone who falls within this percentage, I also know that many of these statistical surveys are undercounts, and there is also a disproportionately high representation of trans and gender-diverse people within these statistics.

I know in my bones, in how I shake in my core every time I am misgendered, in how much I have lost family and felt neglect and abandonment at university, in former workplaces, and among general society, that a deliberate ignorance of my self-identify is a cruel and gruesome denial of my personhood. Every time I am misgendered – when it gets too complicated on a form so I just tick my assigned gender at birth and shake, when I experience impacts of anxiety and panic in doing paperwork, or the mental preparation of having to meet people with the risk of navigating 'being outed' – impacts how I move through this world with a lot of pain, mental illness, and a fear of institutional and social neglect, isolation, and abandonment. These are not the impacts of *being* trans, but the impact of transphobia. This Bill, when it becomes the law, will be an important step in advocating for the safety of lives such as mine.

Being trans, being affirmed in my identity – every time someone genders me correctly, every time I can tick 'non-binary' on a form, or a medical staff member doesn't immediately assume my gender – I experience a profound sense of joy and love and protection from precarity that should be the right of every person. My sense of personhood should be a guarantee of the law, and the trans and gender-diverse community, which has long fought for these rights, should be able experience an affirmation of our lives – in our love, joy, grief, wonder, anger, and everything else that reflects the complex, unique and beautiful realities of our lives.

I encourage you to take into consideration these experiences, which are in plenty, and bring the Queensland laws into line with the convention of Federal laws. Alongside the passport, Medicare card, marriage licenses, and Centrelink (all Australian federal services), Queenslanders should have the opportunity to amend their birth certificates.

Trans rights are immovable human rights, and should not vary based on the state one is born in.