

MEDIA RELEASE
Wednesday 7th November 2018

Speaking up for Tasmania's Women

In recent debate regarding proposed amendments to the *Justice and Related Legislation (Marriage Amendments) Bill 2018*, incorrect statements have been given a platform by groups such as Women Speak Tasmania ('WST').

WST say the safety of women's services is at risk if transgender women are allowed access.

Further, WST claim to speak for the concerns of the broader Tasmanian community in this – presumably for Tasmanian women.

We are a group of women's specialist services. WST did not consult our representatives before making these statements and they do not represent the views of our organisations, staff, Boards of Governance or membership.

It is our position that transgender women are women and they are welcome at our services.

As key organisations representing women's voices in Tasmania, our service policies and advocacy positions are developed through regular processes of discussion and consultation. We have not been informed of any consultation process by Women Speak Tasmania through which their policies were developed.

We can say with certainty that they do not represent the large number of women associated with our organisations. They do not speak for us.

The proposed amendments are narrow in scope, relating to two discrete issues: the removal of sex markers on birth certificates; and the removal of the requirement for transgender people to undergo sex reassignment surgery in order to obtain documents that properly reflect their true gender. To assert that the reforms represent anything more than this is wrong.

Women Speak Tasmania hold the position that transgender women are not women and oppose the amendments on this basis. This is unjust and prejudicial.

WST also argue that transgender women pose a threat to women's safe spaces.

There is no research or service experience to suggest that men who seek to harm women change their gender or masquerade as transgender women in order to do so.

Acknowledging in law the human rights of transgender people does not reduce the human rights enjoyed by non-transgender people. Protecting women's rights and supporting transgender people are not mutually exclusive.

Through our collective experience of providing legal, health, domestic violence and housing services to women, we are already successfully supporting transgender women who, it should be noted, are often themselves victims of violence and targeted by people who use abusive behaviour.

Arguments such as those promulgated by WST only result in greater danger, including physical assaults to transgender women, non-binary individuals, and women who do not conform to stereotypes of femininity. These attitudes also stand as barriers to gender diverse people accessing services and as such, they remain at greater risk to violence and abuse.

For the vast majority of the population the proposed amendments will have no apparent practical impact. But for those in the transgender, gender diverse and intersex community the impact is profound.

The amendments do very little, beyond making life significantly easier for a small group of people. To the extent that WST have an issue with that, it is clearly an ideological one and in its effect it is discriminatory.

Our organisations have always been a safe and welcoming place for all women and they remain so.

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