



VICTORIAN WOMEN'S TRUST

21 November 2016 {emailed to 31 members of Parliament}

Dear Parliamentarian,

Support for the *Births Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2016*

We are writing to urge you to vote in favour of the above-named legislation that will improve access to birth certificates for transgender, gender diverse and intersex people.

The Victorian Women's Trust is an independent advocate for women and girls. Since 1985, we have been promoting gender equality through research, education, policy and awareness raising. As an organization that supports and advocates for equality for all women, we recognise the particular vulnerability of transgender and intersex women and the fundamental importance of identity documents to the sense of self and the day-to-day activities that most of us take for granted.

Transgender people experience lower education attainment, higher rates of employment and poor mental and physical health (40-50% of trans people attempt suicide at some stage of their lives) when compared to the mainstream population. These outcomes are linked to the high levels of discrimination, stigma, and harassment faced by trans people.

Currently the law requires invasive, unnecessary and irreversible surgery and for a person to be unmarried before they change their certificate. The Bill will change this and make it easier for trans, gender diverse and intersex people to access a birth certificate that reflects the gender they live as – their true gender. The Bill recognises that birth certificates are particularly important for young trans people, who face the distress of being 'outed' when they apply for their first job or the incorrect gender recorded on a high school certificate. Lastly, gender diverse people who fall outside the male and female categories will also be recognised for who they are.

We believe that there is much to gain through the passing of this bill by increased support for the needs of transgender, gender diverse and intersex people. The disintegration and de-harmonisation of society, as portended by some public commentators and politicians, we believe will not come to pass, particularly around the so-called dangers of public toilet use by transwomen. We must remember here that anyone who feels uncomfortable about sharing a

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public toilet space with a trans person has probably already done so both unconsciously and with no adverse outcomes.

Therefore, we support this bill because it will empower these individuals as they undertake day-to-day activities and move through public spaces and institutions.

Yours sincerely

Mary Crooks AO

Victorian Women's Trust

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