

Kirsten Woodward,
Manager of Social Programs and Services
City of Sydney
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Sydney
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July 28th 2020

Dear Ms Woodward,

Re Feminist Legal Clinic

I am writing, in my personal capacity, to express my concern about the letter you sent on 24th July to Ms Kerr concerning the Feminist Legal Clinic's advocacy for sex-based rights. I am not a feminist, and have no association with the Clinic. I have not even met Ms Kerr. I am concerned however, that there be freedom of speech in relation to transgender issues. That speech should be respectful, to be sure; but there must be freedom to debate the issues and argue different points of view within the progressive movement.

Your letter is being widely interpreted as an attempt to censor the organisation on ideological grounds, backed up by a threat of eviction.

My concern in this area arises from thirty years or more in advocacy for the protection of vulnerable children and young people. There are huge issues concerning the current trends in medical transitioning of those under 18 years old. I am working with psychiatrists, psychologists, paediatricians and others on these matters.

I do not doubt at all the real and serious suffering of those who experience a discordance between their inner sense of gender and their biological sex. Nonetheless, there is compelling evidence that many of the young people who are now presenting to gender clinics may be influenced in doing so by friends, social media and YouTube celebrities who paint a rosy picture of the transition journey.

To give you a sense of the size of the problem: there has been an increase in some places of around 1000% in the number of young people seeking to transition over the past ten years. Disproportionately, they are teenage girls. In the past, 3-5 times as many males as females identified as transsexual. So there has been an inversion in terms of the natal sex of those experiencing gender dysphoria.

A great many of these teenage girls are very troubled. Research indicates that they are as much as ten times as likely to be on the autism spectrum. They are also much more likely to have histories of sexual abuse, and to suffer from various mental health issues unrelated to gender dysphoria. Disproportionately, they come from dysfunctional families.

There is huge concern amongst medical practitioners and allied health professionals about the risks of putting these troubled children and young people on a medical pathway to transition, which they may deeply regret a few years from now. Increasing numbers do indeed regret it, but they have made irreversible changes to their bodies and in many cases have lost their fertility by that time.

Add to this, all the issues about women's sports, and a range of other such concerns. There is clearly a need for an open and well-informed public debate on these matters; but it is extraordinarily difficult now to discuss these issues. People who raise these concerns are hounded out of jobs, attacked for being 'transphobic' and so on. JK Rowling is the most recent person to experience this.

There is a level of censorship going on which is profoundly troubling.

I ask you to revise your approach to this matter and to be a champion of freedom of debate on this issue which has so divided the progressive movement. The City of Sydney should not abuse its powers to engage in discrimination against traditional feminists who want to uphold the importance of biological sex-based differences.

Yours sincerely



Professor Patrick Parkinson AM

Dean of Law

The University of Queensland