

Appendix A: Disinformation and Misinformation Analysis of Mainstream Media - Prejudice

Transgender Women Routinely Portrayed as ‘Threats’ to ‘Safety’

Despite transgender identities being approximately uniformly distributed between all gender identities, reporting in Australian mainstream media mastheads focuses on transgender women, with more than 88% of articles about transgender topics focused exclusively on transgender women.

Australian mainstream media articles have particularly honed in on recent law reform in various Australian jurisdictions to allow transgender people to update the legal sex on their birth certificate without being subjected to irreversible (and sometimes unwanted) surgical sterilisation. These reforms reflect an evolved understanding of human rights. In 2015, the United Nations published an [inter-agency statement](#) from the **Office of the High Commission of Human Rights, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF** and the **World Health Organization** addressing forms of eugenics and forced, coercive and otherwise involuntary sterilization around the world. The consensus statement found:

“In many countries, transgender and often also intersex persons are required to undergo sterilization surgeries that are often unwanted, as a prerequisite to receiving gender-affirmative treatment and gender-marker changes. According to international and regional human rights bodies and some constitutional courts, and as reflected in recent legal changes in several countries, these sterilization requirements run counter to respect for bodily integrity, self-determination and human dignity, and can cause and perpetuate discrimination against transgender and intersex persons...”

“Discrimination on the basis of gender identity has been recognized by international human rights bodies as a human rights violation. Human rights bodies have condemned the serious human rights violations to which transgender and intersex persons are subjected and have recommended that transgender and intersex persons should be able to access health services, including contraceptive services such as sterilization, on the same basis as others: free from coercion, discrimination and violence. They have also recommended the revision of laws to remove any requirements for compulsory sterilization of transgender persons.”

This human rights position is also supported by the **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**, which has deemed coercive sterilisation laws to be a violation of international human rights. The decision to undergo irreversible surgical sterilisation is a decision that should be made between a doctor and informed patient on the basis of expected therapeutic benefits and risks, free from government coercion or contingent legal benefits. Despite this, some states in Australia still require transgender Australians to be permanently surgically sterilised as a precondition to legal recognition of their lived gender (and consequently, the ability to keep intimate information about their transgender status private).

Australian mainstream media outlets have vigorously opposed law reforms in every State of Australia to remove coercive eugenics requirements for transgender Australians. More than 96% of articles covering these law reforms sensationally repeated claims that transgender people should continue to be sterilised as a matter of “public safety”. Many implied (or outright claimed) that unsterilised transgender people constitute a “threat” in gendered facilities such as bathrooms, hospitals, and prisons. Despite transgender Australians being the cohort most significantly affected by such laws, less than 2% of articles published in Australian mainstream media on these law reforms included any perspective from a transgender person subjected to such coercive sterilisation laws. 0% of articles clarified that, of the 118 jurisdictions

worldwide which have implemented such reforms, 0 have reported any associated statistical increase of sex crimes or predatory behaviour in bathrooms.

Mainstream press articles involving other topics also frequently demonise transgender women, depicting them as a “threat” to the “safety” of other women. Continuing this pattern of demonisation, articles frequently cite specific examples from abroad of transgender women committing terrible crimes to generalise about all transgender women as a “threat”. This reporting pattern has also commonly been employed in the past to vilify and portray racial minorities and religious minorities as a “threat” to others, perpetuating negative stereotypes about criminality.

Notwithstanding, we are unable to locate ANY cogent empirical evidence that transgender women are any more or less likely to engage in criminal acts compared to other women. There is however, substantial evidence that transgender women are at much greater risk than the general population for sexual violence, sexual assault, verbal abuse, and physical assault.

More than recent 245x articles published by Australian mainstream media have expressly promoted, or uncritically repeated, claims that transgender women constitute a “threat” to the “safety” of non-transgender people, and that new measures should be introduced to increase discrimination and exclusion of transgender women. Australian mainstream media publications frequently repeat claims that such discrimination is necessary to protect the “safety” of women and children. In support of this, articles frequently cite fringe groups purporting to be engaged in the advancement of “women’s rights”. One of the most widely cited organisations in Australian mainstream media on the topic of transgender women’s rights is the Women’s Forum Australia - a fringe anti-abortion lobby group which also opposes same-sex parenting and transgender rights (not to be confused with the local branch of the peak global women’s rights body, **International Women’s Forum (Australia)** which expressly supports inclusion of transgender women).

Actual peak bodies and mainstream groups focused on the advancement of women’s rights receive near-zero coverage in topics of transgender women, safety, and inclusion. On 20 March, 2023 following a period of sustained inflammatory reporting in the Australian mainstream media, **UN Women Australia**, the peak body for the advancement of women’s rights in Australia, issued a public statement reaffirming the importance of including transgender women:

“Gender equality can only be achieved if all women and girls are included. This means trans women too. UN Women continues to stand up for LGBTQIA+ rights, in recognition, respect and celebration of the diversity and resilience of our communities worldwide”.

The statement was not covered in any Australian mainstream media masthead. Another group of more than 50 women’s rights groups in Australia published a statement in 2022 making expressly clear that the full and equal inclusion of transgender and intersex women does not infringe on the rights of women who are cisgender and endosex, saying:

“Stoking hostility, uncertainty and misunderstanding harms trans women and children, preventing their full contribution and participation in our communities. It moves us away from a community that values inclusion, dignity and respect; a community where everyone can feel and be safe. As organisations advocating for gender equity and women’s safety, we denounce this attempt at division. We are united in our support of inclusion, dignity and respect for all women.”

Signatories to the statement included **Domestic Violence NSW, Women's Electoral Lobby, Full Stop Australia, End Rape on Campus Australia, Ending Violence Against Women Queensland, Fair Agenda, YWCA Australia, Equality Australia, Transcend Australia, Plan International Australia, Siren: A women in sport collective, Human Rights Law Centre, National Council of Jewish Women Australia, Women with Disabilities Australia, Older Women's Network NSW, and Harmony Alliance.**

In 2018, the US **National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence**, a collective of more than 200 women's rights groups, rape crisis counselling centres, and domestic violence shelters, published a consensus statement opposing discrimination targeted at some women on the basis of their transgender history, saying, in relevant part:

"States across the country have introduced harmful [initiatives] that seek to restrict transgender people's access to genderspecific facilities... Those who are pushing these proposals have claimed that these proposals are necessary for public safety and to prevent sexual violence against women and children. As rape crisis centers, shelters, and other service providers who work each and every day to meet the needs of all survivors and reduce sexual assault and domestic violence throughout society, we speak from experience and expertise when we state that these claims are false..."

"It is natural to be concerned about safety and privacy. As advocates and survivors, we know the threat of sexual assault is real and pervasive. Every time we hear of someone who speaks of their assault or abuse, we feel their pain. The safety fears that many have, especially those who are survivors, are not baseless or irrational, nor should they be dismissed. However, discriminating against transgender people does nothing to decrease the risk of sexual assault."

"Discriminating against transgender people does not give anyone more control over their body or security. Those who perpetuate falsehoods about transgender people and nondiscrimination laws are putting transgender people in harm's way and making no one safer. We cannot stand by while the needs of survivors, both those who are transgender and those who are not, are obscured in order to push a political agenda that does nothing to serve and protect victims and potential victims. We will only accomplish our goal of ending sexual violence by treating all people, including those who are transgender, with fairness and respect."

Neither of these position statements have ever been covered in any mainstream Australian media.

In our view, the continued and sustained demonisation and portrayal of transgender women (and transgender rights) as threats to others, is an abuse of media ethics. This is consistent with well-settled media ethics principles which depict racial minorities, sexual minorities, and religious minorities as 'threats' absent any cogent, empirical evidence.

We are also aware that, entirely independent of our work, a more limited-scope, finite-duration, corpus linguistic examination of how the Australian press reports on transgender people and issues was also [published](#) by Dr Alexandra Garcia from the Sydney University Corpus Linguistic Lab in 2021. Dr Garcia's conclusions broadly concur with our analysis for the same time period.

Appendix B: Disinformation Analysis in Mainstream Media - Health and Medicine

Disinformation Analysis in Mainstream Media - Health and Medicine

'Gender incongruence' is a condition codified in the World Health Organisation's ICD-11 international diagnostic manual. It was recently [de-pathologised](#) as a mental health disorder (as homosexuality has also been before it). The prognosis for gender incongruence, if left untreated, is poor. A consensus of medical peak bodies consider that gender-affirming healthcare is both 'medically necessary' and highly effective with little downside risk:

- The **Australian Psychological Society** is the peak body and professional association for clinical psychology in Australia. It was founded in 1966 and has over 27,000 members. It has a position statement expressly supporting [gender-affirming](#) healthcare.
- The **Australian Medical Association** is the largest professional medical association in Australia for doctors and medical students. The AMA was established in 1962 and has approximately 30,000 members. It has a [position statement](#) which provides that "Gender-affirming care is linked with a range of positive health outcomes for people who are trans and gender diverse" and calls on the Australian government to provide better access to care. The AMA also asserts that "Studies indicate regret from undergoing gender-affirming surgery is rare."
- The **American Academy of Pediatrics** is the world's largest professional association for paediatricians. It was founded in 1930, has 67,000 members and 390 staff. It publishes numerous medical journals, texts, and clinical practice guidelines. It has a comprehensive [position statement](#) supporting gender-affirming healthcare.
- The **American Psychiatric Association** is the world's largest professional association for psychiatrists. It was founded in 1844 and has 37,400 members. It publishes various journals and the diagnostic manual (DSM) used to codify all mental health pathologies. It has a [position statement](#) expressly supporting gender affirming care for properly diagnosed adults, adolescents, and children. Its support for gender-affirming healthcare has never been cited in the Australian press.
- The **American Medical Association** is the world's largest professional medical association for physicians. It was founded in 1847 and has over 245,000 members. The AMA publishes numerous AAA rated medical journals and has ties with several of the world's largest research institutions. The AMA publishes the specialty codes used to identify classes of medical practice in the US. The AMA has clear [position statements](#) supporting gender affirming healthcare. Cited once in the Australian press.
- The **Endocrine Society** is the international peak body in the field of endocrinology. It was founded in 1916 and publishes a number of AAA rated medical journals. It has 18,000 members and a clear [position statement](#) supporting gender affirming healthcare. Cited only twice in the Australian press.
- The **Pediatric Endocrine Society** is an international network of over 1,500 paediatric endocrinologists, which evolved from the John Hopkins Endocrine Alumni in 1965. It has a clear

[position statement](#) supporting gender affirming healthcare. Its support for gender-affirming healthcare has never been cited in the Australian press.

- The **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry** is the world's largest paediatric psychiatry association, with 8,000 members. It was founded in 1953. It has a clear [position statement](#) supporting gender affirming healthcare. Its support for gender-affirming healthcare has never been cited in the Australian press.
- The **American Psychological Association** was formed in 1892 and today has more than 133,000 members and an annual budget of \$133m USD. It publishes more than 70 clinical psychology journals and has published hundreds of books, including the 8-volume "Encyclopedia of psychology". It has a comprehensive 33-page set of [treatment guidelines](#) which recognise that transgender people "are more likely to experience positive life outcomes when they receive social support or trans-affirmative care". Its support for gender-affirming healthcare has never been cited in the Australian press.
- The **Royal Children's Hospital**, which operates the largest gender research and clinical treatment unit in Australia, and publishes the Australian Standards of Care, also received substantial attention, but was rarely directly cited. The overwhelming majority of editorial treatment was strongly negative / critical. The RCH issued a [statement](#) on 3 September, 2021.
- The **World Professional Association for Transgender Health** is the peak body for all doctors practising and researching in transgender health. It was established 43 years ago and publishes the [Standards of Care](#) which have been adopted and followed by the majority of gender clinicians globally. It expressly supports gender affirming healthcare and "**opposes the use of the lay press, either impartial or of any political slant or viewpoint, as a forum for the scientific debate of these issues, or the politicisation of these issues in any way.**"
- The **Royal Australian College of Physicians** is the professional association responsible for training, educating, and accrediting physicians in Australia. It was founded in 1938 and has 28,000 members. In response to a protracted media campaign by Australian mastheads demanding a Parliamentary Inquiry into gender dysphoria, the RACP produced a [Letter of Advice](#) to the then Federal Health Minister. The letter noted the limited body of evidence resulting from insufficient investment into care for transgender individuals, the small population of transgender individuals, and ethical challenges with control-based studies. As with other areas of medicine affecting small populations, the letter notes that treatment guidelines based on the best available evidence are 'entirely valid' and supports the principles underpinning the current Australian Standards of Care as well as those of the American Academy of Paediatrics, the US Endocrine Society, the World Professional Association of Transgender Medicine, the Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents and New Zealand. Responding to repeated calls in Newscorp publications over a sustained period of several years demanding a Parliamentary Inquiry into gender affirming healthcare, the RACP said:

"Finally, our clinicians noted that there are substantial dangers posed by some of the proposals that have been put forward during the recent public debate on this issue, such as holding a national inquiry into the issue. A national inquiry would not increase the scientific

evidence available regarding gender dysphoria but would further harm vulnerable patients and their families through increased media and public attention.”

The **Associated Press** - the international peak body for journalism established in 1864 - asserts in its topical guide for reporting on transgender topics:

“[Gender affirming] treatments can improve psychological well-being and reduce suicidal behavior. Starting treatment earlier can allow transgender teens to experience puberty around the same time as other teens. But other factors must be weighed, including emotional maturity, parents' consent and a psychological evaluation. But even ahead of contemplating medical treatment, experts agree that allowing children to express their gender in a way that matches their identity is beneficial, such as letting children assigned male at birth wear clothing or hairstyles usually associated with girls, if that is their wish.”

Despite a broad consensus of peak medical bodies, our analysis shows the overwhelming majority of reporting by Australian mastheads cited fringe (and often wholly unqualified) religious pseudo-medical lobby groups on the topic of gender-affirming healthcare:

- The most widely cited medical association in the Australian press on the topic of gender affirming care is the **National Association of Practising Psychiatrists** (“NAPP”) with a marked increase in media coverage in 2022-2023. The NAPP is not a peak medical body. It is a fringe group of less than 100 members (not all of whom are physicians) established in 1996 by individuals “concerned” about the direction of the Australian peak body, the Royal Australia New Zealand College of Psychiatry. [REDACTED] The NAPP publishes a set of “[Treatment Guidelines](#)” for gender dysphoria. Its primary medical research citations include social media pages from Reddit, Tumblr, and YouTube. Where actual medical science is cited, the “Treatment Guidelines” cherry-pick from a number of very old, outdated studies from low-grade journals which have since been displaced by much more comprehensive, more contemporaneous research with larger sample sizes. The researchers cited by NAPP have [stated](#) that the conclusions drawn by the NAPP (and other fringe groups) do not follow reasonably from the research observations of their studies.
- The second most widely cited medical organisation on matters of gender affirming healthcare in the Australian press corpus since 2016 is the **American College of Pediatricians** (“ACP”) which has a similar-sounding name to the peak body “American Academy of Pediatrics”. Despite its official-sounding name, the ACP might be [REDACTED] As of 2022, it has less than 150 members. It performs no original research and does not publish any medical journals. Members do not need to be licensed physicians, and prior to 2019, applicants for membership were required to declare their support for the organisation’s “Judeo-Christian values”. The ACP has clear position statements opposing [same-sex parenting](#), opposing [gender-affirming healthcare](#), opposing [emergency contraception](#), supporting [conversion therapy](#), opposing [same-sex marriage](#), discouraging [divorce](#), supporting [religious refusal to treat](#), opposing [euthanasia](#), and supporting [corporal punishment](#). The ACP is listed as an LGBTI hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Its sources of funding are opaque but believed by many to originate from religious groups.

- The third most widely cited organisation in the Australian media on matters of gender affirming healthcare is the Women's Forum Australia. The organisation purports to be an 'independent think tank', however it is [REDACTED]. Despite providing hundreds of comments to the media on the topic of gender affirming healthcare, [REDACTED]. We are unable to locate any original medical research performed by the organisation.
- The fourth most widely cited organisation in the Australian media on matters of gender affirming healthcare is Binary. Binary is a well-funded, organised anti-transgender lobby group, led by Kiralie Smith, a former paid professional anti-Islam lobbyist. Binary was previously branded as "Marriage Alliance", and was originally established to campaign against same sex marriage in Australia. Ms Smith says that a primary aim of Binary is "defending kids from extremists and their agendas". Despite being one of the most widely cited individuals on medical matters, medical efficacy, and bioethics of gender affirming medicine in the Australian media, Ms Smith has no medical qualifications to speak of, and has never performed any original medical research into medical care for gender diverse people.

Individual Medical Practitioners

The most widely cited medical professional (107 citations) on the topic of gender affirming care in the Australian press since 2016 is Dr John Whitehall. Dr Whitehall says he has never seen, diagnosed or treated a single case of gender incongruence. We could not locate any original medical research into the topic performed by Dr Whitehall. His practice area is paediatric tropical medicine. Dr Whitehall is the former deputy of the Fred Nile's Christian Democrats political party and has been a recurring speaker at conferences organised by the [Australian Christian Lobby](#) and the [Family First Forum](#). [REDACTED]

The second most widely cited (101 citations) professional on the topic of gender affirming healthcare (and the most widely cited in the last 18 months) is Dr Phillip Morris. Dr Morris has also [REDACTED]. He is not affiliated with any medical unit practising or researching in gender healthcare. Dr Morris is a practising psychiatrist specialising in psychogeriatrics, and medico-legal and forensic psychiatry, at a small practice in rural Queensland. We have been unable to locate any primary research by Dr Morris on the topic of gender-affirming care. The website of his professional clinical practice irregularly conflates matters of medicine, appointment scheduling, [religious evangelism](#), and [religious advocacy](#).

Conversely, the medical opinion of Associate Professor Sam Winter has received only two mentions across the same timeframe. Professor Winter has decades of experience in research and clinical practice in gender-related medicine. His expert evidence has been broadly accepted, and his recommendations followed, in numerous Family Court [matters](#) involving gender dysphoric adolescents. Professor Winter was a member of the World Health Organization [working group](#) that defined the diagnostic criteria for gender dysphoria. His research into gender dysphoria has been sponsored by the UN Development Program, and several of his research papers on gender dysphoria treatment published in the eminent peer-reviewed medical journal, The Lancet (h-index 807).

Associate Professor Michelle Telfer, who runs Australia's largest gender clinic within the nation's largest paediatric hospital, has received overwhelmingly negative and personally-targeted coverage in the Australian press. In [Adjudication 1799](#), the Australian Press Council found that The Australian newspaper unfairly targeted Dr Telfer in more than 45 articles, finding, in relevant part:

"The Council considers that by repeatedly quoting the views of professionals from various fields of medicine and psychology that the treatment was experimental and harmful without explaining they are not medical specialists in the area, and linking the criticism so personally to [Dr Telfer], the publication failed to take reasonable steps to ensure fairness and balance and breached General Principle 3."

Our statistical corpus analysis shows that this Press Council adjudication had zero effect on reporting standards in Australian mastheads. Our analysis also suggests that most, if not all, Australian mastheads have adopted a very strong partisan position on the topic of gender affirming healthcare, effectively exercising their power as the fourth estate to (a) excite fear, uncertainty and doubt about the treatment protocols, (b) emphasising medical risks with little recognition for the therapeutic benefit and prognosis and very low risk levels, and (c) citing fringe medical opinions, including many with no medical qualifications in this field whatsoever.

Throughout 2017-2019, the Daily Telegraph and The Australian mastheads repeatedly quoted a scientifically questionable claim, disputed by every eminent medical association, that **"Most children grow out of gender confusion."** One Daily Telegraph opinion piece which referred to the **"alphabetical jumble of the gender confused in their pursuit of destruction.."** of childhood. Another article published by the Daily Telegraph asked, **"...is it any wonder that the number of children confused about their sex has exploded?"**

The Daily Telegraph also opined in a full page piece in both print and online, claiming that **"forcing [adolescents] down an irreversible path of gender reassignment surgery looks like child abuse to me."** The Daily Telegraph and the Courier Mail also uncritically repeated claims connecting transgender healthcare with child abuse frequently throughout 2016 and 2017. In September 2017, the Courier Mail referred to evidence-based medical care as **"effectively child abuse"** In November 2016, the Courier Mail and the Daily Telegraph also repeated the claim that providing evidence based healthcare to Australian transgender youth is a **"fashion in child surgical abuse."** In April 2017, the Daily Telegraph again repeated the claim that administering hormonal medical care to transgender youth is **"effectively 'child abuse... [a] massive intrusion into the minds and bodies of children'"**. In September 2017, the Daily Telegraph yet again repeated the claim that the medical treatment protocols for adolescent gender dysphoria amounts to a **"fashion in child surgical abuse."** Another Daily Telegraph article, published in 2017 restated the dubious allegation that the medical profession was forcing transgender individuals into surgery, repeating its earlier claim that **"forcing [adolescents] down an irreversible path of gender reassignment surgery looks like child abuse."** Notwithstanding, every major medical association in Australia has express position statements making it unethical to attempt to direct or steer another person's sexual orientation or gender identity. There exists no cogent evidence that anyone is being "forced" or "coerced" into unwanted gender transitions.

Since we began monitoring and analysing public responses to Australian articles concerning gender-affirming care, we have detected and catalogued more than 8,000 comments on Australian mainstream media operated platforms from parents and carers stating, in response to Australian

mainstream media articles, that they have (or would) deny their transgender child of access to a psychologist, a doctor, and/or evidence-based medicine. That seems regrettable in circumstances where Australian transgender children lack agency to obtain medical care for themselves. In January 2023, Australian 14-year old Noah O'Brien [died by suicide](#) after being denied access to gender-affirming healthcare.

On 3 October, 2022, the **American Medical Association**, **American Academy of Pediatrics**, and the **Children's Hospital Association** (together representing more than 270,000 physicians) [wrote](#) to the US Department of Justice, requesting military and federal law enforcement protection from ongoing "bomb threats and threats of personal violence" against children's hospitals and physicians engaged in the provision of gender-affirming care. We continue to receive increasing reports of threats against Australian clinicians practising gender-affirming healthcare. The **World Professional Association for Transgender Health** also denounced the widespread [misinformation](#) and harmful rhetoric in the press (and on social media) contributing to such violence.

Since 2016, we have also detected more than 75x mainstream newspaper articles implying that transgender identity is a mere "fad" or "social contagion" or merely a "fashionable" "trend" or amusement. There is no empirical evidence to support the suggestion that transgender (or gay) individuals constitute a mere fad. In response to sustained inflammatory reporting in News Corporation mastheads repeating this claim, the **Australian Psychological Society**, the peak body for psychology in Australia with over 27,000 members, published a [press release](#) in September 2019 stating:

"Empirical evidence consistently refutes claims that a child's or adolescent's gender can be 'directed' by peer group pressure or media influence, as a form of 'social contagion'. To say that there is a trans-identity crisis among young Australians because of social media pressure is not only alarmist, scientifically incorrect and confusing, but is potentially harmful to a young person's mental health and wellbeing. Claims that young people are transgender due to 'social contagion' serve to belittle young people by asking them to believe that their sense of self and their gender is nothing more than a by-product of what other people might think or say through the media. Further, describing awareness of being transgender as a form of social contagion implies that such awareness can be 'corrected' through psychological, medical or spiritual 'conversion therapies'. There is no evidence to suggest that such approaches work in terms of changing a person's gender. What such debunked 'therapies' do produce, however, are high levels of shame, disrespect and distress."

The **United Nations Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity** also published an [article](#) expressing concerns about such claims and reporting standards in the Australian press, saying:

"This is why in light of recent attempts in the Australian media and public debate to paint transgender youth – and the doctors who serve them – as part of a new "social fad" or "ideology", I wish to state in the strongest terms possible that such narratives are not only profoundly incorrect, but also perpetuate harmful stereotypes which delegitimise the identities of trans people and ultimately impede access to their human rights."

Despite these criticisms, references to transgender identity as a "social contagion" and "fad" continued uncorrected, unacknowledged, and unabated through the entire period of our analysis.