

**Submission
No 81**

**INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT (PARENTAL RIGHTS) BILL 2020**

Name: Dr Michelle Dutton

Date Received: 17 August 2020

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in the capacity of a medical professional with experience in caring for the trans community, who is deeply concerned about Mark Latham's proposed amendment to the Education Act which seeks to "prohibit the inclusion of anything to do with gender fluidity" in schools across New South Wales.

I am a General Practitioner working in Melbourne who is specialised in transgender health. I provide care including Gender Affirming Hormone therapy to many trans adults, both young and old. I am also involved in supporting and advocating for trans children and adolescents and assisting them in accessing specialised services.

Mark Latham's proposed bill is the product of a man with fixed views and an axe to grind with regards to trans identities. He is a man who has demonstrated time and again that he does not believe in the existence of trans people, something which flies in the face of medical evidence, as well as anthropological evidence from cultures around the world, where trans identities have existed for thousands of years.

Mr Latham appears to believe that teaching children about trans identities will somehow cause children who would otherwise have been cisgender to become transgender. There is no evidence that this is the case. What is clear is that the presence of programs that teach children about gender diversity allows trans children to understand that they are not alone, that they are not broken and that their classroom or school can be a safe place for them to be their true selves.

Trans people face an enormous uphill climb simply to be themselves. They are likely to face schoolyard bullying, transphobic comments from classmates and a media which primarily erases trans identities or portrays them as objects of disgust or pity. Trans people internalize very early on that life as a trans person will be filled with challenges that they would not face as a cis person. This makes "coming out" as trans a courageous and difficult path – it is not a path that children will somehow be coerced or tricked into simply by learning that there are a myriad of gender identities other than cisgender identities.

Programs that teach and celebrate diversity in all its forms and encourage the respect of all people regardless of their gender identity do not cause cis-children to become trans. What they do is teach cis-children to be compassionate allies and teach trans children that they are welcome in their classroom and their school, even if there are those such as Mr Latham who would seek to deny them a place in society.

Those of us who work in this area have to agenda other than to be able to provide the best possible care for trans or gender questioning young people. To this end the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne have created Standards of Care which have been extensively peer reviewed and are considered amongst the best in the world.

<https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/adolescent-medicine/australian-standards-of-care-and-treatment-guidelines-for-trans-and-gender-diverse-children-and-adolescents.pdf>

Please examine the proposed legislation based on the best available evidence from people who truly do want to protect all young people, including those who may happen to be trans.

Warm Regards

Dr Michelle Dutton
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