

Can an MTF transgender be a woman?

Dr Lorene Gottschalk
Senior Lecturer, School of Business, University of Ballarat

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**Australasian Co-Editors:
Dr Lorene Gottschalk
School of Business
University of Ballarat
Associate Professor Sheila Jeffreys
Department of Political Science
University of Melbourne**

**If you are interested in
participating in this series
please contact Anne Doggett
email:
anne.doggett@optusnet.com.au**

MTF believe themselves to be women, a belief that is nurtured and reinforced by the medical profession and the transgender industry. MTF seek recognition as women in all spheres, in the law in relation to marriage, in equal opportunity in the workplace in access to all spaces that women can enter including health centres, refuges, sports and festivals.

In 2006 in Australia a group of older women decided to hold what they described a private party open to women born and raised as females. This criteria intended to exclude male to female transgenders (MTF) from attending. The reasoning of the organisers was that the event was organised as an opportunity for women to share experiences that are unique to women and experiences with which a man, because of his different life experiences, would not be able to identify. Furthermore they argued that a MTF, though possible legally recognised as a woman also had totally different life experiences and thus would not be in a position to join in the sharing of experiences with women born and raised female.

The methods MTF use to gain access varies and includes surreptitious means and legal challenges. This paper discusses the strategies used by MTF to claim entry to such space as their right. It then asks the question of whether an MTF can be a woman by exploring the unique socialisation of girls and boys and the unique experiences of MTF from childhood, through adolescence and early adulthood to the point of diagnosis of GID to their formal/legal identification as a woman.