

# Gender theorist questions transgender "phenomenon"

April 29 2014, by Ryan Sheales

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A respected feminist theorist is calling for a radical rethink of society's acceptance of transgenderism.

In research presented in the new book *Gender Hurts*, University of Melbourne sexual politics lecturer Professor Sheila Jeffreys described transgenderism as a "hugely harmful phenomenon".

Transgenderism—when an individual identifies with a gender other than their biological one—has been a widely recognised condition for several

decades, and can be treated with hormone therapy or surgery, if the individual wants.

Professor Jeffrey's believed increasing campaigns for "transgender rights" have been extremely damaging.

"Transgenderism is invariably born of severe psychological distress, but society's response to it actually creates new harms," she said.

"*Gender Hurts* highlights the distress caused to the partners and families of transgender people, and the agonizing regret sometimes felt by people who switch gender."

Dr Jeffrey's also argued transgenderism undermines women's rights by seeking to expand entry into 'women only' spaces, such as toilets, changerooms, women's shelters and even rape helplines.

"One of the central problems with transgenderism is that it's based on the outdated notion of gender," she said.

"Radical feminism considers gender as a sorting system for male domination, something that provides 'the bars of the cage' that imprison women in their daily lives.

"Without [gender](#), transgenderism could not exist.

"As such, when transgender rights are inscribed into law and adopted by institutions, they promote ideas harmful to women's equality."

Professor Jeffrey's has researched transgenderism for several years. *Gender Hurts* is based on original interviews and a critical analysis of a wealth of literature from the fields of history, medicine, the law and sociology.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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