

Submission to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

July 2021

I am a female New Zealand citizen by birth and write with deep concern about the trajectory our current Labour government is taking in promoting gender identity at the expense of the legal rights of women. Women's rights to single-sex spaces, sex-based representation and even the language we use to describe ourselves, are being seriously eroded by the deeply misogynist thinking of gender identity ideology.

Everyone agrees that it would be shockingly racist to re-define 'Maori' to include people with no Maori heritage who simply like the idea of being seen to be Maori and enjoy performing a 'Maori' role. The NZ government seems to be blind to the parallel scenario regarding women's identity that is equally as shocking and is also profoundly sexist. By re-defining 'woman', as this government is doing, to include any man who simply likes being seen as a woman and is performing a 'feminine' role, the very meaning of womanhood is debased. 'Female' is not a feeling, a level of hormone or a costume, but the NZ government is degrading womanhood as if it is a performance.

The sexist belief that 'male' is the default human and that being 'female' requires only a 'feeling' and a statutory declaration is about to be enacted into law through clauses 22B to 22G of the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationships Registration Bill (BDMRR) that will have its second reading in the NZ parliament in August 2021. This Bill will allow any person to change the sex on their birth certificate **multiple times**, without having any counselling, medical diagnosis or treatment, or any risk assessment. By making a simple declaration, with no bodily changes required, a person will acquire a legal document that says they are of the chosen sex and that will entitle them to be treated as if they are *actually* of that sex.

Real biological sex is important for services, representation, health care, statistics and more. Allowing multiple changes of sex classification will create an absurd and confusing muddle in every walk of life. Although the Minister of Internal Affairs, Jan Tinetti, acknowledges that sex (whether male or female) is not the same as gender (a cultural expression of masculinity or femininity), she is blithely going ahead with proposals that will treat the two categories as the same on an official document – birth certificates.

Minister Tinetti knows that this change will cause confusion and will **reinforce the incorrect belief that sex is determined by gender**, but she continues, nevertheless, because the NZ government is more concerned with placating the transgender lobby than in taking the time necessary to find an alternative way of providing identity documents – one that does not falsify birth certificates and does not have negative consequences for women.

When birth certificates are falsified, as proposed, the only commonly-held and non-intrusive proof of one's sex is made suspect. At present, we all trust birth certificates to record the truth but sex self-ID will make *all* birth certificates unreliable because how will we know whether or not they have been altered? The Minister understands that there are times when a person's sex is highly relevant (for intimate health care, sensitive employment roles, single-sex spaces and groups), yet she is negating a long-standing and trusted document that proves sex and is avoiding any responsibility to provide a useful replacement.

It is unacceptable for a government to recognise a serious problem yet commit to passing the legislation anyway, without in any way addressing the problem.

Minister Tinetti falsely asserts that “there is little risk of information on birth certificates allowing men to access women-only places or services” and that in other countries “there has not been evidence found of any serious unmanageable consequences of introducing a self-identification process.”

Women’s role as carers frequently gives them unsupervised access to children. If any man can declare himself to be a woman, without making any bodily changes (or changing his birth certificate), that fully-intact male will also have ready access to children. **He may be a harmless transgender person or he may be a sexual predator— children will have no way of discerning the difference.**

At present, when women and girls enter female-only spaces they are protected, not by birth certificates, but by a social contract that agrees any person with a male appearance can be evicted. Sex self-identification will dismantle that social understanding and make it defunct by creating confusion about who does and does not have the legal status of ‘woman’.

Before sex self-identification is even law, the confusion is already happening, with several reported instances in NZ of women complaining about men in gym, pool or retail store changing rooms and being rebuffed by the management who have said the men have claimed they are transitioning and therefore have a right to be in women’s spaces.

That government officials can claim there is no evidence of a detrimental effect from sex self-ID is only because the evidence is not being collected or collated anywhere and, just as with sexual assault, many women do not report the invasion to their privacy and simply withdraw from the spaces, as happened in this example.

For the sake of removing a bit of red tape for a small number of people, the safety and dignity of half the population is being disregarded.

Free-for-all sex self-identification as provided in the new BDMRR Bill will lead to:

- Women and children self-excluding from public spaces to avoid voyeurism or conflict with men who claim they are women for base purposes.
- Children up to their mid-teens losing their independence because they will need to be accompanied by an adult in public facilities.
- Males being included in single-sex groups such as girls’ schools, Girl Guides, and women’s prisons.
- Uncertainty over whether requests for female health carers and counsellors will be respected.
- Women losing opportunities to represent their sex in all spheres of life, including sport, the arts, politics, and business.

The NZ government may be motivated by wanting to be kind and inclusive to every sort of transgender person but they are paying no heed to the threat that gender identity ideology poses to women. Those few citizens who know what is happening – as the proposals have

not yet been open for public consultation – are rightly concerned about women’s safety and protecting the definition and language of womanhood.

The gender identity lobby insists that everyone must suspend reality and dance attendance to their self-perception. Transgenderism is a fundamentally unhealthy ideology that, instead of criticising the oppressive culture that makes some feel left out, encourages people to turn their distress against their own bodies and mutilate them. It is particularly dangerous for impressionable children, as evidenced by the exponential rise in the number of young people, especially girls, now pursuing transition in the hope it will be a panacea for their unhappiness. Despite its obvious perils, the ideology has gained so much influence that the truth of biological sex is now being denied and what was once a factual description of ‘woman’ as ‘adult, human, female’ is being overturned in favour of crushing stereotypes that turn back women’s rights at least sixty years.

It is not within the prerogative of any government to give away the definition of ‘woman’, to give away women’s and children’s safety, or to give away the fact of human sexual dimorphism. Humans cannot actually, physically, change sex and pretending that they can seriously undermines women’s legal rights which are connected to our sexed bodies, not to an ethereal gender identity.

I strongly oppose sex self-identification and urge the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women to make an urgent investigation into how this ideology has gained so much sway in New Zealand that it threatens rights that generations of women fought for and that were only enacted into law in the Human Rights Act as recently as 1993.

A woman
New Zealand