



Australian and New Zealand
Professional Association for Transgender Health

Accessing Superannuation for Transgender Related Surgeries:

**Submission by Australian and New Zealand Professional
Association for Transgender Health (ANZPATH)**

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Contents

About ANZPATH	3
ANZPATH has the following aims:	3
ANZPATH submission re superannuation changes	4
ANZPATH signatories to this submission	5
Contact us.....	5
References.....	7

About ANZPATH

ANZPATH was formed by Australasian attendees at the 2009 World Professional Association for Transgender Health (previously known as the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association) conference in Oslo, Norway.

'Transgender' as used in the name of this organisation is an umbrella term and incorporates many identities and human phenomena associated with sex and/or gender variance. It is not intended to express an opinion about the aetiology or diversity of sexual formation and/or gender expression. Neither does it intend to conflate these various experiences of living.

ANZPATH has the following aims:

- To promote the subjects of the health, rights and well-being of people who experience difference in sexual formation and/or gender expression, within professional training programs
- To serve as a forum for and promote communication and collaboration amongst professionals involved in the health, rights and well-being of people who experience difference in sexual formation and/or gender expression
- To encourage, promote and share research in the fields of the health, rights and well-being of people who experience difference in sexual formation and/or gender expression
- To develop best practices and supportive policies which promote the health, rights and well-being of people who experience difference in sexual formation and/or gender expression, and
- To establish a known network of professional service providers in the fields of the health, rights and well-being of people who experience difference in sexual formation and/or gender expression

Our Association represents professionals throughout Australia and New Zealand working in transgender health. These include general practitioners, psychologists,

psychiatrists, endocrinologists, surgeons, gynaecologists, paediatricians, nurses, social workers, speech pathologists, lawyers and academics. Our multidisciplinary membership ensures that our organisation is the voice of professionals working in this area.

ANZPATH submission re superannuation changes

A recent report estimated that 0.6% of the United States adult population identify as transgender (Flores, Herman, gates, & Broen, 2016). Unfortunately, transgender people in Australia still face a great deal of stigma, discrimination, and exclusion. They experience high rates of mental illness including anxiety, depression and suicidality. The attempted suicide rate in this group is markedly increased above the general population due to this marginalisation, discrimination and disenfranchisement.

Access to gender affirming healthcare is recognised as a medical necessity by a number of international professional organisations, including the American Medical Association, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (Lambda Legal, 2016), and ANZPATH also recognises this necessity. International human rights principles also state that transgender people should have the right to access gender affirming healthcare (Grinspan et al., 2017).

Gender affirming healthcare can include counselling, hormonal gender reassignment, and a range of surgical interventions, and are effective treatments for gender dysphoria. It is well documented that the vast majority of surgical interventions relieve the dysphoria associated with the condition (Smith, van Goozen, Kuiper, & Cohen-Kettenis, 2005). In many countries these surgical treatments are available in the public health system. Surgical interventions include bilateral mastectomy, orchidectomy, penectomy, vaginoplasty, phalloplasty, facial feminisation surgery, and breast augmentation. These procedures are not routinely available in the public health system in Australia.

The ongoing failure of Commonwealth, State, and Territory departments of health to provide these essential surgical treatments have added to the burden, both

psychological and financial, of Australians with gender dysphoria trying to access essential treatments for their condition. For many patients, their only resource to obtain what can be lifesaving, essential surgical treatment, is access to their superannuation. Until now, to satisfy the requirements of early withdrawal of superannuation, they have qualified under the category “chronic mental illness”. Any attempt to restrict access to superannuation for medical reasons will further disenfranchise this already much marginalised group in our society. We believe it will increase rates of mental illness in a group that already has extremely high rates of suicidality.

We therefore suggest that the government consider any changes to the rules regarding early access to superannuation on medical grounds take account of those Australians with gender dysphoria. Until such time as health services Australia wide provide adequate publicly funded transgender surgical services, people with gender dysphoria should be allowed continued access to their superannuation to fund these essential treatments.

ANZPATH signatories to this submission

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