

This resource offers general information for people approaching the Monash Health Gender Clinic, or waiting for an appointment. It addresses areas often asked about by people contacting the clinic. You may have some questions that are specific to your situation, and we hope that we will be able to deal with all your queries when you come to the clinic.

<b>GENERAL</b>		
What is the Gender Clinic?		<p>The Gender clinic provides services for trans and gender diverse people. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assisting a client to explore their gender identity and providing information about the diversity of gender identities and expressions;</li> <li>• assessing whether a person is experiencing gender dysphoria and exploring various medical and social interventions which may assist in alleviating that dysphoria;</li> <li>• assessing suitability for hormonal and surgical treatments;</li> <li>• providing psychological support with issues that may emerge during transition.</li> </ul>
	Who can access the Gender Clinic?	We are available for trans and gender diverse people of 17 years of age or older, their family members, and partners, who are residents of the States of Victoria and Tasmania. We are also a resource for health care providers and community and advocacy groups.
	How do I access the Gender Clinic?	You will need to have a referral from a medical practitioner, and to have completed a General Information Form at the end of the Information Pack
	Where is the Gender Clinic located?	<p>352 South Rd, Hampton East. There are on-street parking options on South Rd and nearby side streets. Please check parking signs for restrictions, time limits and fees.</p> <p>The most convenient public transport access is usually via Moorabbin railway station on the Frankston line.</p> <p>Clients travelling from regional or remote areas may be eligible for session conducted teleconference. The clinic uses BlueJeans software. Further information can be obtained from <a href="http://www.bluejeans.com">www.bluejeans.com</a> Clients may also be eligible for transport assistance. For further information please see <a href="https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/rural-health/vptas-how-to-apply">https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/rural-health/vptas-how-to-apply</a></p>
	Is there disability access?	There is a ramp at the main entrance suitable for people using wheelchairs. We can allocate an easy access office on the ground floor. Please advise about your needs when you confirm your appointment.

<b>REFERRALS INTO THE CLINIC</b>		
Do I need a referral to be seen at the clinic?		Yes
Who can refer me to the clinic?		A medical practitioner, such as a GP or medical specialist. Click on <a href="http://www.monashhealth.org/images/content/document/189112_1518141512.pdf">http://www.monashhealth.org/images/content/document/189112_1518141512.pdf</a> You can provide your health care provider with this information
What if my GP won't refer me?		If you are worried that your GP will not refer you, then ask for a second opinion from another GP. Gender Incongruence and Gender Dysphoria are internationally recognised medical conditions, for which patients are entitled to seek treatment. Please be aware that your GP may not have had experience of the trans and gender diverse community and may not be aware of procedures, but they can find guidance from HealthPathways.
How long is the current waiting time for an initial appointment?		Around 6 months at early March 2018. Check with our administrative staff when you submit your referral letter.
How do I find out my position on the waiting list?		Contact administrative staff via email to <a href="mailto:genderclinic@monashhealth.org">genderclinic@monashhealth.org</a> with: surname, date of birth and Medicare number.
Can I seek appointments privately?		There are a range of private practitioners who provide similar services. See <a href="http://www.anzpath.org/about/service-providers/victoria/">http://www.anzpath.org/about/service-providers/victoria/</a> and/or discuss options with our Administrative staff. These usually have shorter waiting lists than the Gender Clinic, but out-of-pocket costs typically range from \$20 to \$120 per session.
What can I do while I wait for an appointment?		Everybody's situation is different and personal to them. The best advice we can give you is to keep yourself fit and well, both physically and mentally. We also encourage clients to engage with local peer support groups. You may wish to also consider the following which can be undertaken while on the waiting list:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking some steps to change your identity documents.</li> <li>• Seeing a speech therapist.</li> <li>• Seeking private counselling.</li> <li>• Commencing hair removal treatment such as laser therapy or electrolysis.</li> </ul>
What if I have already had an assessment elsewhere?		Clients assessed by a private mental health practitioner and referred to the clinic are subject to the usual waiting time. Provided that a copy of the initial assessment is provided, it is likely that the assessment by one of our clinicians will be much briefer.
<b>SERVICES</b>		
What services are available for TGD people and their loved ones at the Gender Clinic?		<p>Mental health assessment and treatment for gender identity, gender expression and/or gender transition related concerns.</p> <p>Social work support</p>
	What treatments are available for TGD people at Monash Health, by referral from the Gender Clinic?	<p>Endocrinology for hormone assessment and prescription.</p> <p>Hysterectomy (removal of womb), oophorectomy (removal of ovaries), tubal ligation (surgical contraception) and initial assessment for fertility preservation at Obstetrics and Gynaecology.</p> <p>Laser hair removal will soon be available at the Poly Cystic Ovarian Syndrome Clinic</p>
	What transition services are not available through the Gender Clinic?	<p>Most surgeries</p> <p>Peer support</p> <p>Department</p> <p>Fertility preservation</p>

		However, we can refer to other services
	Can I have hair removal treatment through the Gender Clinic?	The clinic is in the process of purchasing a laser hair removal machine and we hope to provide this service soon. The clinic does not provide electrolysis. This needs to be sought privately.
	Can I have speech therapy to help me modulate my voice in line with my identified gender?	Yes – you can start at the La Trobe Communication Clinic while on the waiting list. They will accept the gender clinic, from: yourself, health or social work professionals or the Gender Clinic. Their form is available at <a href="http://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/863551/Request-for-Services-2018.pdf">http://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/863551/Request-for-Services-2018.pdf</a>
	How much do services cost?	At present there are no costs associated with attending any appointments at Monash Health. There are costs associated with purchasing hormones. Hormones are however available on the PBS and so the costs are usually between \$6 and \$40 per month depending on what you have been prescribed and whether you have a health care card. There are significant costs associated with surgery.
	Do I need private health insurance for surgery?	For most gender transition surgeries, private health insurance is strongly recommended – with the highest level of hospital cover. This is needed to cover some of the costs of the surgery. Even with the highest level of private health insurance cover, there are still significant out of pocket fees.  All health insurance companies have waiting periods (usually 12 months) before a claim can be made.  Some surgeries for trans masculine people are available through Monash Health, including removal of internal reproductive organs (hysterectomy and oophorectomy) and tubal ligation for contraception. Private health insurance is not required for surgery provided by Monash Health, which are at no cost to the client.
How much does private surgery cost?	What is the best way to find private health insurance?	PrivateHealth.gov.au is an unbiased way to find private health insurance options <a href="https://www.privatehealth.gov.au/dynamic/search">https://www.privatehealth.gov.au/dynamic/search</a>

	How much money will I get back from my private health fund?	This will depend on the type of insurance you have and the cost of the surgery. You can speak to your private health fund to ask them about the amount you will get back.
	How much of the cost is covered by Medicare?	For vaginoplasty, Medicare only covers a small proportion of the procedures involved. For private hysterectomy and oophorectomy, out of pocket costs will vary between surgeons and hospitals.
	What are the out-of-pocket costs for surgeries?	For vaginoplasty, with top level private health insurance, the out-of-pocket cost is around \$16000. For chest reconstruction surgery, the out-of-pocket cost is \$6000 to \$12000, depending on whether you have private health insurance. Please contact the surgeon directly for an up-to-date estimate of costs.
	What financial support does the clinic offer?	The Gender Clinic is able to provide some financial support to a limited number of clients each year. This is to assist with out-of-pocket costs of some surgeries. For vaginoplasty, we require that private health insurance be taken out. The clinic is unable to assist with the cost of private health insurance. Please speak to your clinician for further information.
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>		
	What are the WPATH Standards of Care and does the Gender Clinic follow these guidelines?	WPATH is the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. It is a non-profit, interdisciplinary, professional and educational organization devoted to transgender health. Its mission is to promote evidence-based health care, education, research, advocacy, public policy and respect in transgender health. WPATH publishes the Standards of Care, which communicate worldwide professional opinions about the treatment and management of gender dysphoria. Gender Clinic staff follow these guidelines in the delivery of gender transition-related care. The Standards of Care are available at <a href="http://www.wpath.org">www.wpath.org</a> .  Although the guidelines can sometimes appear restrictive, the clinic prefers to adopt a cautious approach in order to reduce the likelihood of regretting treatment. However, the clinic applies the guidelines in a way that recognizes a person's unique anatomical, social or psychological situation. This flexible approach aims to achieve positive outcomes for clients in a safe manner.

<p>What is a mental health assessment?</p>		<p>A comprehensive mental health assessment is a very important part of the clinic’s work with clients. During the assessment your clinician will gather information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your experiences of gender at various stages of your life,</li> <li>• Any gender-related distress,</li> <li>• Your mental health history and current supports,</li> <li>• Other relevant life experiences.</li> </ul> <p>The purpose of this is to identify your strengths and what supports are needed as you embark on strategies to reduce your distress.</p> <p>In addition, ongoing monitoring or counselling normally occurs alongside the “Real Life Experience” of living in the affirmed gender. This involves forming a trusting relationship with a mental health clinician in order to explore their gender identity.</p> <p>As everyone is unique, there is no predetermined or recommended number of sessions. Meeting regularly with a mental health clinician is an important means of receiving support, finding the best set of medical and social options for the individual, working through difficulties where they arise and addressing expectations of the outcomes of transgender treatments and gender transition. This process usually covers a broad range of issues in order to consider all the circumstances that will help an individual who is transitioning achieve stability and satisfaction in their lives.</p>
<p>Why do you require a mental health assessment?</p>		<p>“Gender Dysphoria” is a term that describes the <i>discomfort and unhappiness</i> a person experiences as a result of the tension between the gender assigned to them at birth and the gender with which they identify (including non-binary gender identities). We acknowledge that not everybody experiencing diversity in gender expression necessarily experiences distress.</p> <p>While it is not considered a psychiatric disorder to have a gender identity which differs from the gender assigned to you at birth, it is very important to rule out other conditions. As a result, the clinic takes great care in ensuring that clients referred for gender affirmation are not experiencing gender dysphoria due to a treatable mental health condition, such as Dissociative Identity Disorder or some forms of psychotic disorders.</p> <p>In addition, the purpose of the assessment is to identify supports that may help prior to starting any gender affirming treatments. These could include referrals for assistance with housing, employment, social isolation, and mental health difficulties.</p>
<p>If I have mental</p>		<p>Many of our clients have, or have had, mental health issues. Clients who have a mental health condition such as</p>

	health issues, will this impact my assessment?	schizophrenia, depression, Borderline Personality Disorder or Autism Spectrum Disorder are still able to receive support from our clinic. Their assessment may be longer to ensure that they are well supported and prepared prior to any gender-related treatments.
	I've had/am having care and treatment from Mental Health Services. Will this stand against me getting treatment from the Gender Clinic?	<p>No. If you have had or are receiving care and treatment for mental health issues, this won't prevent you from accessing our clinic or getting treatment with us. It's not uncommon for trans and gender diverse people to have or to have had mental health issues.</p> <p>The Standards of Care requirement is that mental health conditions be "reasonably well controlled ... these concerns need to be managed prior to or [at the same time as] treatment of gender dysphoria."</p> <p>Therefore having treatment for mental health conditions may assist in gaining approval for hormonal or surgical treatments.</p> <p>As we don't operate a crisis/emergency service, we will need to be reassured that you have access to adequate support and treatments (if needed) before we can approve hormonal or surgical treatments</p>
	Will you speak to my family during the assessment?	The assessment process is strictly private and confidential. We will not speak to your family unless there is an immediate risk to your safety or we have your clear consent to do so. We do however encourage meeting with families to provide education and discuss any concerns they may have, in order to help them support you during your transition.
<b>STARTING AT THE CLINIC</b>		
What can I expect when I come to the service?		<p>It is a common experience to feel nervous before your first appointment. This, however, is a safe space in which you can explore some very personal issues. By being honest and open, your clinician will be able to form a comprehensive understanding of your experiences and needs.</p> <p>As a new client, you will be offered appointments with a mental health professional at the clinic to discuss the best treatment options for your individual situation. An initial series of interviews (approximately 3-6 sessions), will allow assessment under the WPATH SOC guidelines. It may also include, with your consent, a detailed psychological assessment and/or a family assessment.</p> <p>All assessments are discussed at regular staff meetings.</p>



		of hormone treatments and what monitoring will be needed throughout your treatment.
	What if I have already been prescribed hormones by a different provider?	If your GP or another service provider begins medication before or while you are on the waiting list, this will not affect your position on the waiting list.
	What if I have been taking hormones without a doctor's prescription?	<p>The clinic will see patients who have been begun hormonal treatments without medical supervision. However, reflecting a harm minimisation approach, we will refer you to an endocrinologist or experienced GP to assess the impacts and begin prescribing, so that hormones are taken in a controlled manner.</p> <p>Our advice is that for your health and safety, you should never take medication sourced through the internet or on the 'street'. Starting hormonal treatments that are not medically supervised can be dangerous to your long-term health.</p> <p>The clinic understands the enormous pressures that some people will feel about the need to begin a physical transformation. Despite this, the clinic will always advise that you wait until you have been assessed. The timing of hormone treatments is very specific to the individual and is dependent on a whole series of considerations that need to be made by you and your doctors</p>
What support is offered by the Gender Clinic after starting hormones?		Individuals are invited to attend follow up sessions after commencing hormones for support or other individual identified needs.
I have been told I am not approved for hormones, yet. What do I do?		Anyone assessed as not being appropriate for gender affirmation therapy will be offered support to find ways of living with their Gender Dysphoria/gender variance, which do not involve medical treatments. They can also be offered the option to be re-assessed in the future, following other non-medical interventions.
<b>SURGERY</b>		
When can I have surgery?		For chest surgery, you will be referred to a surgeon for a medical assessment once your initial assessment has been completed and you feel ready to proceed with surgery. Once you have met with the surgeon you may then book a

		<p>provisional date for surgery. Within 3 months prior to your surgery date you will need to meet with your mental health professional again to ensure that you fulfil the criteria to undergo surgery as specified in the WPATH standards of care. Once this has been completed you can contact the surgeon to confirm your surgery date. Please remember that for genital surgery, a second opinion from a different mental health professional within the team must be obtained. This second opinion is usually shorter and last from 2-4 sessions.</p>
<p>What is required for surgery approval at the Gender Clinic?</p>		<p>For Chest surgery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One opinion/referral required</li> <li>Persistent gender dysphoria</li> <li>Capacity to give informed consent</li> <li>Legal emancipation in given jurisdiction</li> <li>Medical /Mental Health concerns well controlled</li> </ul> <p>For Hysterectomy/BSO &amp; Orchiectomy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two referrals required</li> <li>Persistent gender dysphoria,</li> <li>Capacity to give informed consent,</li> <li>Legal emancipation in given jurisdiction,</li> <li>Medical /Mental Health concerns well controlled</li> <li>12 continuous months of hormone therapy as appropriate to the patient’s gender goals (unless the patient has a medical contraindication or is otherwise unable or unwilling to take hormones)</li> </ul> <p>For Phalloplasty or Vaginoplasty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two referrals required</li> <li>Persistent gender dysphoria</li> <li>Capacity to give informed consent, Legal emancipation in given jurisdiction</li> <li>Medical /Mental Health concerns well controlled</li> <li>12 continuous months of hormone therapy</li> <li>12 continuous months of living in a gender role that is congruent with gender identity (“Real Life Experience”)</li> </ul>
	<p>Do I need to be living full-time in my affirmed</p>	<p>The Real Life Experience is a period of time (usually 12 months) prior to genital surgery where people live in a role congruent to their gender identity. This allows the person to develop stability in their affirmed gender, and to build confidence in their ability to live in the affirmed gender role. It is also intended to raise awareness of the personal</p>

	gender before I have surgery?	<p>and social consequences of transition; this is very important because changing one's gender expression has been known to contribute to employment discrimination, marital problems and divorce, and the restriction or loss of contact with children.</p> <p>Many people find that the Real Life Experience allows time for improvement in mental health, and during the Real Life Experience, a mental health professional will help you explore the impact of your transition on family, relationships, finances and legal issues. This process is consistent with the Standards of Care.</p>
	When am I considered to be living full time in the gender congruent role?	<p>Living full time in the gender congruent role is a valuable part of the transition process.</p> <p>When a person is considered to be living 'full time in the gender congruent role' social and occupational changes have to be made.</p> <p>A person transitions to live in the acquired gender 100% of the time and in all aspects of daily life, i.e. at work, at university, at volunteering, at home, and socially with friends and family members.</p>
Do you make referrals for private surgeons or overseas surgeons?		<p>Yes. At present most surgery is provided by private surgeons in Australia. We are also able to provide referrals to overseas surgeons though we do not have any particular affiliation with any overseas surgeons.</p>
I have been told that I am not approved for surgery yet. What do I do?		<p>Treatment can be deferred for many different reasons. Your treating clinician will discuss your individual circumstances with you and will explore with you ways in which you can progress.</p>
	My Body Mass Index is over 30. Can I have surgery?	<p>Your Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated by dividing your weight in kilograms (kg) by your height in metres (m), then dividing the answer by your height again to get your BMI score. This is a commonly used method by doctors and nurses to approximate whether a person is under or overweight. You calculate your BMI using this link <a href="https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/know-your-risks/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator">https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/know-your-risks/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator</a> The calculator will also indicate how much over or under your 'ideal' weight you are.</p> <p>The surgeons who perform these operations have strict BMI score requirements for patients who wish to undergo surgery. In particular, excess body mass can create problems with breathing under a general anaesthetic, blood loss and causing difficulty with accessing the parts of the body where surgery will be performed. It is essential to</p>

		achieve a weight of under 100kg and BMI less than 30.
	I'm a smoker. Can I have surgery?	There are already numerous health reasons for quitting smoking, but this becomes even more important, prior to hormonal treatments and/or surgery. All the hormone and hormone-blocking medicines prescribed to aid with gender affirmation raise the risk of an occurrence of Australia's biggest killers: Heart Disease, Cancer and Cerebrovascular Accidents (Strokes). <i>When this is coupled with the risks already associated with smoking, the level of potential harm to you as our patient becomes unacceptably high.</i>  <i>Treatments may not be offered until you are able to quit smoking for a period prior to surgery.</i>
<b>DOCUMENTS</b>		
How do I go about changing my name and gender marker on personal documents?	How do I approach changing my gender markers on ID?	This varies between each State and the Commonwealth Government. A useful summary is at <a href="http://www.pgdc.org.au/legal">http://www.pgdc.org.au/legal</a>
	Driver's licence	This varies between states. For Victoria: <a href="https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/renew-replace-or-update/update-your-details/change-of-gender">https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/renew-replace-or-update/update-your-details/change-of-gender</a>
	Medicare, Centrelink, ATO, other Commonwealth government bodies	<a href="https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/updating-your-gender-details-us">https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/updating-your-gender-details-us</a> <a href="https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/update-your-personal-details-medicare-card">https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/update-your-personal-details-medicare-card</a>
	Passport	<a href="https://www.passports.gov.au/passportsexplained/theapplicationprocess/eligibilityoverview/Pages/changeofsexdoborpop.aspx">https://www.passports.gov.au/passportsexplained/theapplicationprocess/eligibilityoverview/Pages/changeofsexdoborpop.aspx</a>
	Birth Certificate	This varies by state, and can depend on a number of factors. Contacting your state Births Deaths and Marriages or equivalent is necessary to obtain the most up to date information.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Victoria</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">New South Wales</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Queensland</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Western Australia</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Tasmania</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">South Australia</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Northern Territory</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Australian Capital Territory</a></li> </ul>
	Monash Health	<p>Monash Health client records will follow the details on your Medicare Card – please advise if your name and gender marker are changed there.</p> <p>Prior to changing your Medicare card, you can register a preferred name on the Monash health system, and inform staff of your preferred title and pronouns. At the Gender Clinic, we will make every effort to respect your choices.</p>
	What is the Keypass ID?	ID without a gender marker on it. Available through Australia Post
	If I change genders, am I still considered to have been in a defacto relationship?	Yes
	Can I transition if I am married?	Yes you can transition, and change most identity documents. Currently, in order to change your birth certificate, most states and territories require that you are unmarried. However, following passage of the same-sex marriage legislation in 2017, the states have 12 months to change their legislation.
<b>SUPPORT</b>		

Can you provide support/explanation for my partner and children?		Yes
Can you help with support when I am recovering from surgery?		Yes
What other organisations provide information and support specifically for TGD people?		The Gender Clinic can provide a list of community organisations upon request.
What other organisations provide information and support more generally around mental health and other issues?		The Gender Clinic can provide a list of mental health and social support organisations upon request.