



## **Monash Health Gender Clinic and COVID-19: A temporary pause in operations**

**5 May 2020**

Monash Health is taking many actions to prepare for and respond to COVID-19. In line with government direction, Gender Clinic staff will be redeployed to other areas within Monash Health. Although some elective surgeries have recommenced, at this stage gender affirming surgeries have been cancelled until further notice.

You can find updated information at Andrew Ives office:

<https://transsurgeryaustralia.com.au/consultation-changes/>

The redeployment of Gender Clinic staff will impact some of our mental health services. As of 27 March 2020, the Gender Clinic has placed a three-month pause on:

- All mental health assessments
- Follow up appointments
- Laser treatments, effective immediately.

However, as our staff have not yet been redeployed, we are continuing some assessments that had already commenced. Because this could change rapidly, clients are being selected on the basis that their assessments can quickly be concluded. Your Gender Clinic clinician will advise you when that is the case.

### **Monash Health Endocrinology Services**

At this stage the Endocrinology Clinic at Monash Medical Centre will continue to operate as normal. Please note that all Endocrinology appointments have been changed to teleconference or phone call.

If you need to contact the Endocrinology team please call 03 8572 2514.

### **Mental Health and Psychological Support**

We are very conscious of the fact that our pause in operations may cause some distress for people. At this time, psychological support and access to gender-affirming treatments are still important to the health and wellbeing of many Trans, Gender Diverse and Non-binary people.

### **Contact us if you have questions**

If you have questions about our pause in operations and want to talk to a clinician from the Gender Clinic, please call us on 03 9556 6216 and leave a message on the answering machine.

Given our staff numbers are small, we may not be able to respond to your query on the same day that you leave a message. Please consider the following resource options instead if you want more immediate assistance.

### **If you need immediate support**

If you're feeling distressed and want to talk this through with someone straight away, we encourage you to call the following phone services:

- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636
- Switchboard (LGBTIQA+ phone support 3pm - midnight) 1800 184 527.

### **Thoughts of suicide or self-harm**

If you are having suicidal or self-harm thoughts, or are struggling to cope and might need more than a supportive chat, please contact your local [Crisis Assessment Team](#).

If you have concerns for your immediate safety or that of another person please call Emergency Services on 000.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **1. What will happen to the Gender Clinic?**

Gender Clinic operations will resume once conditions related to COVID-19 have stabilised. We don't know how long this will take yet, and recognise that this uncertainty may be very unsettling for people undergoing or awaiting assessment. Current clients have already been contacted by their Gender Clinic clinician as soon as practical, and people on the waitlist will be contacted by other staff.

### **2. If I'm on the waitlist what do I do? Can I still be referred to the Gender Clinic?**

During the pause, the Gender Clinic will not be accepting referrals or adding people to the existing waitlist. If you are currently on the waitlist you will maintain your position. As an alternative, clients may wish to explore private options - list of private clinicians is available on our website.

### **3. How can I get alternative Trans and Gender Diverse support?**

If you are seeking a referral for approval for hormones or surgery, please see the updated list of providers below: TGDNB clinics (as at 24 April 2020), with information on what services they are currently providing. This is not a complete list so you should also consult the [list of private providers](#) on our website. Please note that the information provided here only relates to the current COVID-19 period and that these services may change as conditions improve.

Please advise us if there are any inaccuracies, or of changes to services being provided.

One key service is a Victoria-wide Trans and Gender Diverse Community Health Service, which can currently provide fast appointments and dedicated support, including:

- Peer Navigation by a trans and gender diverse health worker

- Telehealth and in person appointments with GPs, counsellors, psychologists, a psychiatrist, and endocrinologists trained in trans and gender diverse affirmative practice
- Online facilitated group support
- Access to hormones.

To access these services, visit [Your Community Health](#) or call 03 8458 6756.

#### **4. How can I get other mental health support?**

These are uncertain times with frequent developments. We want to acknowledge the impact that events such as these have on a person's mental health and we strongly encourage you to have a look at the following links which have some very helpful advice on how to care for your mental health over the coming weeks and months:

- [APS resource for coping with COVID](#)
- [Headspace resource for coping with COVID](#)
- [Beyond Blue resource for coping with COVID](#)
- [ACON resource for coping with COVID.](#)

We want to thank you for your patience and understanding.

Stay safe and we look forward to connecting with you again as soon as possible.

***The Monash Health Gender Clinic Team***