

## DEFINITIONS

**SEX & GENDER** It is important to understand the difference between sex and gender. Put simply, “sex is between the legs and gender is between the ears”. Sex is assigned at birth and is determined by physical attributes such as your genitalia – male, female and some variants (some people have varied genitalia). Gender, often known as brain-sex, is your internal sense of self, how you perceive and choose to express yourself, and how you mentally present and react – as man, woman, boy, girl, androgynous (gender-neutral).

A **CROSSDRESSER** is a person who feels the need to dress in clothes which are usually worn by the opposite sex – occasionally, frequently, or much of the time. Most crossdressers are born male, and it has been said that as many as 1 in 10 males will feel the desire to dress female at some time in their life.

There is generally no desire by the crossdresser to take hormones or to have their genitalia surgically changed. Although many crossdressers enjoy looking, feeling and acting like a person of the opposite sex, most are quite happy with their birth sex and do not seek surgical treatment.

Crossdressers may have little in common with transsexuals, apart from the obvious desire to dress in the clothes of the opposite sex, and the great majority of crossdressers will live their entire lives largely satisfied being a genetic male, and will not become transsexual.

A **TRANSSEXUAL** is a person who instinctively feels that they do not belong to the sex they have been associated with at birth. They usually have a natural tendency to prefer participating in the activities generally associated with the opposite sex, and frequently show signs from an early age of not ‘fitting in’ with society’s expectations.

No-one really knows how many people are transsexual – statistics vary widely, most are outdated, and many have been based only on those that have presented themselves for treatment. Some estimates are as high as 1 in 500, some as low as 1 in 20,000. The reality is likely to lie somewhere in

between. Many studies by professionals and organisations suggest that it is becoming more common, with more recent studies indicating a growth rate for presentation of around 15%. The number of transsexuals presenting born male (known as Transwomen) is probably between 2 and 3 times that of those born female (known as Transmen).

A transsexual person will usually feel, dress, look, and act like a person of the opposite sex not because they choose or desire to, but because they need to in order to obtain a sense of belonging and peace of mind. Often in the early days of crossdressing, a transsexual person may find being crossdressed sexually exciting, but this is never the most important reason for them to crossdress.

A transsexual person will generally work towards living full-time as the gender they know themselves to be, and will seek hormone treatment to help achieve this. In many cases they will also undergo surgery so that their body matches their gender. However, some transsexual people will take hormones but not have surgery.

## MISCONCEPTIONS

Crossdressing is not directly related to homosexuality, and will not in itself alter your sexual orientation. A common fear is that crossdressing will make you homosexual – this is not the case.

Some homosexuals do dress in the clothes of the opposite sex, but this is an addition to their ‘gay part’ – they usually do not question their gender, want to cross-dress full-time, take hormones or have surgery.

To counter any beliefs that ‘all crossdressers and transsexual people are gay’, it is worthwhile mentioning a survey done by Dr. Wardell Pomeroy, co-author of the famous “Kinsey reports” and director of the San Francisco-based Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality. In this survey it was found that while about three-quarters of crossdressing males were exclusively heterosexual, only half of non-crossdressing males were exclusively heterosexual.

It is not per-se illegal in Australia, and most western cultures,

to crossdress. You have no reason to be ashamed of being a crossdresser or transsexual. The sooner you accept yourself, the sooner you will be able to get out and enjoy life. However, as with any activity, you should ensure that your actions do not cause undue alarm to others. Unfortunately, there are still countries where crossdressing is illegal, invariably based on religious grounds. On the other hand, there are countries where being transsexual is revered!

It is also important for those who have started to feel the need to crossdress more than once or twice that they realise the feelings which they are experiencing will likely stay with them for the rest of their lives – they will always be a part of them.

Many crossdressing and transsexual people have the belief that they will, at some stage, be able to stop the crossdressing. Many will dispose of all their opposite sex paraphernalia (known as purging) more than once in their lives and make resolutions to ‘never do it again’. This denial period may last many years. However, there is no easy ‘cure’ for crossdressing. Both crossdressers and transsexuals need to try to come to terms with themselves as early as possible, realising and accepting themselves for who and what they are. Some may need counselling to do this.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Being a crossdresser or a transsexual person should be considered and addressed openly and honestly and taken into account when forming new relationships. The emotional and financial pain of relationship break-up (particularly when children are involved) is something that no one wishes to go through. Honesty about what you are may be difficult in the beginning of a relationship, but confronting it early may help avoid difficulties further down the track.

If you are a crossdresser or transsexual person you may be different to the majority of the population, but you are in no way a ‘lesser person’. After accepting this special aspect of your life you will find that you can ‘go beyond’ any negative feelings you may have previously had. Usually this does not occur until you find people with whom you can share your feelings – and this is where the Chameleon Society comes in as a support group.

## WHAT CAUSES TRANSSEXUALISM?

We don't really know. For the first six weeks in the womb, the fetus is of neutral gender. Between six and thirteen weeks, development of it is influenced by the action of hormones. Exposure to the male sex hormone testosterone usually causes the fetus to develop male physical characteristics. If not exposed to testosterone it will develop as female.

Researchers at Prince Henry's Institute in Melbourne have found that that some of the receptors which respond to testosterone are different in male-to-female transsexuals when compared with non-transsexual males. They seem to be less efficient at reacting to testosterone. This means that although the body may develop as male, the brain may not, leaving it in a female state.

Further studies of the brains of male-to-female transsexuals have found them to have a structure similar to that of the usual genetic female, despite the body appearing as male.

## CHAMELEONS' ACTIVITIES

The Chameleon Society welcomes all people – whether they are crossdressers, male-to-female transsexuals or female-to-male transsexuals – and their partners, families, and friends. We try to provide an atmosphere where information is freely available and support for all can be found. If you are transsexual, remember that it is not only you who may require help, support and friendship. Those you care for often need support too.

The Chameleon Society has meetings on the second and fourth Wednesdays of a month at a discrete location in East Perth. The meetings are usually from 8.00 pm until 10.00 pm and take the form of a social evening at which tea, coffee and cakes are served. It is an ideal opportunity to share experiences with others, and to get to know and understand yourself, or your partner, friend or family member.

The only thing we ask and expect is that you treat everyone equally and with respect.

There is an extensive library of material about crossdressing and transsexuality available which members may borrow from, including a range of DVDs and video tapes.

Quite a few members frequent the night spots around Northbridge after a Chameleons meeting, and as soon as new members feel confident they are always welcome to join us. If new members are having trouble with buying clothes or makeup, or are looking for ways to better present in the gender they wish or need to, other members are only too willing to help when asked. For those a little shy, there is a place to change clothes, and there is information available as to some "user-friendly" shops – although it should be said that as soon as new members find the confidence to 'step out', the world will become their oyster. Every business is only too ready to take in the dollars.

Apart from the regular Chameleons meeting nights, social events are also held at a number of bars, restaurants and, from time to time, at the homes of different members.

For those members who desire it, direction can be given to various professionals such as general practitioners, endocrinologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.

## CONTACTS

Chameleons may be reached by email at:  
[chameleonswa@yahoo.com.au](mailto:chameleonswa@yahoo.com.au)

The website address is:  
[www.chameleonswa.com](http://www.chameleonswa.com)

The postal address is:  
The Chameleon Society of Western Australia  
P.O. Box 367  
Victoria Park WA 6979.

© The Chameleon Society of Western Australia, 2009.  
All rights reserved.

DESIGN BY ART!MPACT PRINTING BY IONA PRINT

# CHAMELEON SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## INFORMATION FOR CROSSDRESSERS AND TRANSSEXUALS

(Revised July 2009)



*The Chameleon Society*  
Crossdressing, Transsexual and Transgender Social and Support Group