

From: [Michael Barnett](#)
To: [Legal Mailbox](#)
Subject: Objection to application by the Lesbian Action Group
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Dear AHRC,

I write in response to the Lesbian Action Group's application for an exemption to permit only "Lesbians Born Female" people to attend their events.

I represent Aleph Melbourne, a social, support and advocacy group for LGBTIQ+ people in Melbourne's Jewish community. I also advocate for greater inclusion, acceptance and understanding of marginalised and vulnerable people in the broader LGBTIQ+ community. I have been doing this work since the late 1990s.

This application deeply concerns me because at its heart it seeks to create legal sub-categories of women, defined by biological differences.

Contrary to the desires of this organisation, women are not so easily categorised. Traditionally, the understanding was that women were people born with a vagina, and whilst that may be the case for the majority of women, society has come to understand that not every person born with a vagina is a woman, and not every woman is born with a vagina.

Women with variations in sex characteristics (or intersex women) may not be born with a conventional vagina, or may not have XX chromosomes, yet are still women.

Transgender women will rightfully argue that they were female since birth, but that their biology does not match how they experience their gender identity.

To tell a transgender lesbian she wasn't born female is offensive and preposterous, given she would likely argue otherwise, and would be right about herself.

To the point of having to prove a lesbian was "born female", or perhaps was "born with a vagina", this is simply outright degrading and offensive.

No one should ever have to divulge information about the appearance of their genitalia, either at birth or at the present time, in order to gain entry to an event. And whilst this is clearly unacceptable in any circumstance it would be especially problematic for some intersex women.

Women-only spaces have existed for a long time, and understandably so. Excluding transgender and intersex women from women's spaces is offensive and degrading, and will only cause further harm to these highly marginalised and vulnerable groups. It will also set a precedent that will further entrench discrimination against transgender women, a cohort that already experience significant rates of self-harm and suicide due to intolerance and exclusion.

I urge you to reject the Lesbian Action Group's application for an exemption to the SDA.

Sincerely,
Michael Barnett OAM
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Aleph Melbourne
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