



Monday, 31 March 2025

The Honourable Guy Barnett LLM  
Deputy Premier  
Treasurer  
Attorney General  
Minister for Justice

House of Assembly, Parliament House, Hobart. 7000

Email: [guy.barnett@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:guy.barnett@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Minister Guy Barnett,

Re: Hate speech laws must not be used to silence dissent. Free speech protections are needed before any laws intended to curb speech.

We are writing to you directly on the advice of the Health Minister Jacquie Petrusma at our meeting on 18 March 2025, to express our grave reservations about the proposed amendments to the Sentencing Act 1997, which seek to introduce additional aggravating factors in sentencing for crimes motivated by discrimination, without first assessing whether the existing Crimes Act and Anti-Discrimination Act adequately serve their purpose.

We recall at our meeting with you on 20 January earlier this year when we presented our Dossier to you, that you took considerable interest in the Burnie Library banning Women Speak Tasmania from holding a public interest forum of the findings of the Cass Review and in particular the banning of puberty blockers. As you will be aware there are now two inquiries into gender clinic guidelines, federally being conducted by the NHMRC and by the Queensland Government into matters raised by whistleblowers about pediatric gender medicine at the Cairns Sexual Health Service.



At present, the Tasmania Anti-Discrimination Act already protects a broad range of attributes, including gender identity, race, age, sex characteristics, disability, political belief, religious belief and association, among others. But the interpretation of this Act for the purpose of creating “**Policies**” is not being used according to its original intent, the words ‘safety’ and ‘inclusion’ have been weaponized in order to silence and cancel people who believe in biological truth from hiring public venues.

To illustrate the relevance to proposed hate speech laws and urgency of this matter, we bring to your attention that only last week a WST forum planned for the Devonport Library was cancelled allegedly due to WSTs belief in biological truth. In correspondence with Libraries Tasmania, it is clear that Libraries Tasmania, under your Government, has effectively determined that WST is a politically proscribed organisation and will not allow us to hire Library facilities at any time on any subject.

WST had booked a room at the Devonport Library for the 7th of April 2025, to host a forum titled “Women’s Rights in the Modern World,” intending to engage in meaningful discussion on how laws define and impact the concept of what a woman is. (see attachment 1). Our booking was initially accepted, and we began promoting the event through community chat groups and social media.

However, on March 19, Simon Jones, Acting Director of Libraries Tasmania, informed us that our booking had been canceled. When we inquired about the reasons, Mr. Jones cited their Client Diversity and Inclusion Policy, stating in his email: “*We welcome everyone regardless of the characteristics that make people unique, including but not limited to physical or cognitive ability, literacy abilities, age, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or financial situation.*” Furthermore, he asserted that Women Speak Tasmania has made public statements that do not make members of the LGBTQIA+ community feel included or welcome. (see attachment 2)

In addition to the event’s cancellation, we also received hateful and defamatory comments on our Facebook profile, including one that read:

*“Haha get wrecked losers, your fascist event got cancelled! Good luck finding a venue that accommodates **Nazis** and delusional attention seekers like yourselves!”* (see attachment 3). Notably, this comment was posted before we had publicly announced the booking cancellation.



After our booking was cancelled by Libraries Tasmania we attempted to make an alternative booking at The Hive, a Central Coast Council facility in Ulverstone, but again we were cancelled. Hive representative wrote to us about our cancellation *“My concerns are around those seeking to disrupt your event and the impact on others in the venue if it was to occur. I have reasonable grounds to believe that the hosting of the forum at Hive will place my staff and venue patrons/tenants at risk. I have responsibilities under the WHS Act 2012 to keep my team safe at all times, and I am exercising those responsibilities”* (see attachment 4).

The enforcement of “Inclusion and Diversity Policies” by the Tasmanian Government, which in this instance resulted in our organization being barred from hiring a public library facility, has, as mentioned above, effectively designated Women Speak Tasmania as a politically proscribed organisation. WST is being denied the right to hire Government owned public facilities to hold public forums open to all, to discuss legislation that affects us and to share our Dossier as we did with you on 20 January 2025 on the impacts of regressive laws such as sex self-ID.

WSTs views on legislation that affects many in our community are being mislabeled as “hate speech”. This mischaracterization is being used as a tool to cancel, intimidate, and incite hostility against women and men who understand that sex self ID laws have impacted negatively on our community.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16MmsgKJiB/>

The issue of fake hate speech claims was raised at a meeting with ADC Sarah Bolt, Simone Watson and Isla MacGregor in 2016. The Let Women Speak rally demonstrated this reality, as Tasmania Police failed to intervene to prevent violence, other acts of aggression and harassment against our attendees. Attacks that have resulted in the worst attack on citizens freedom of speech in Tasmanians recent history.

<https://sarahphillimore.substack.com/p/what-is-beyond-the-lie-becomes-unreachable>

<https://womenspeaktas.au/2023/03/21/let-women-speak-australia/>

<https://www.thepensivequill.com/2023/07/punch-terf-violent-misogyny-of-trans.html>

Contrary to the assertions of Equality Tasmania and other trans rights activists, we firmly believe that freedom of speech is the cornerstone of any democratic and



pluralistic society. Expanding censorship will only deter open debate, as individuals will fear criminal repercussions for expressing dissenting viewpoints.

History has shown that some of the greatest advances in science, medicine, art, and law have been achieved by those who paddle against the currents of their times, challenging prevailing norms. A prominent example is Galileo Galilei, who was placed under house arrest for asserting that the Earth orbits the Sun—a once-heretical belief that was ultimately proven true. Now, women and men who believe in biological truth are being treated as modern-day heretics as Galileo was in his day. Should any Government proscribe an organisation just because it has a political belief based on biological truth, the defence of children's and women's sex based rights? Does your government consider it acceptable that Tasmanian people have to hold secret meetings to discuss what we consider to be the adverse impacts of a flawed piece of legislation? When in the past has this occurred in Tasmania?

Rather than enacting laws that can be weaponized to silence dissent, we must cultivate a society that encourages open dialogue and genuine intellectual exchange. This promotes peaceful dialogue, not cancel culture. Suppressing opposition will only breed resentment and erode public trust. Public discourse must not be reduced to slurs, slogans, intimidation, or cancellation tactics, but rather should foster engagement through mutual respect and understanding.

Until such time as there is a review of gender law reforms, a timely 5 year review, and the appalling impacts on free speech and other erosions of human rights, as outlined in our Dossier, we urge your government to put a pause on any hate speech laws until there are statewide public consultations on these matters. Statewide consultations that will enable open and robust debate on freedom of speech.

<https://womenspeaktas.au/2025/02/13/dossier-on-impacts-of-tasmania-sex-self-id-laws-on-women-girls-families-and-lgb-people/>

You may not be aware that WST was deliberately excluded from the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute forums in 2018/19 concerning sex self ID laws after repeated requests to participate. We do not wish to be excluded again or for any Tasmanians to be excluded from public consultations on hate speech laws that could likely be used to further escalate attacks from trans rights activists to silence and censor WST and other citizens permanently.



Additionally, we would urge you to consider amending the Anti-Discrimination Act to include philosophical beliefs as a protected attribute, akin to the provisions of the UK's Equality Act.

<https://www.davidsonmorris.com/philosophical-beliefs/>

Furthermore, we advocate for ensuring free speech provisions are included in the Anti Discrimination Act and can not be trumped by other protections in the Act. We would urge your Government to take a step further by committing to Article 19 of the ICCPR on freedom of speech.

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/commission-general/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights-human-rights-your>

We appreciate your attention to these urgent matters and welcome the opportunity to discuss them further at a meeting at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Caballero (Retired GP)  
Women Speak Tasmania

Cc the Hon Jacquie Petrusma