

**Submission to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Topic Consultation
by the Coalition of Activist Lesbians (CoAL) Inc**

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About CoAL

The Coalition of Activist Lesbians Inc. (CoAL) is an Australian-based not-for-profit national advocacy organisation formed in 1994 to work towards ending discrimination against lesbians. CoAL is community-based, unfunded and operates with a human rights and women-centric framework to protect lesbian human rights, and to support lesbians across six state and two territory jurisdictions to participate in activities for positive social change.

The inception of CoAL in 1994 coincided with plans to represent Australian lesbians at the 1995 UN 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing. CoAL was the only lesbian-specific NGO in the world at that time to be UN-accredited, both with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and with the Division for the Advancement of Women.

In addition, CoAL co-hosted the first-ever international lesbian space at the 1995 NGO Forum of the Commission on the Status of Women. However, some hopes were not realised at the Conference. As reported on the ABC, 'For those who sought recognition of lesbian rights, not only was "sexual orientation" dropped from the document...but lesbians at the Conference experienced a high level of 'hate and ignorance" from some participants" (ABC 1995).

CoAL successfully lobbied, with other organisations, for the Australian Government to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2009. In August 2010, CoAL participated in the 63rd UN DPI/NGO Conference in Melbourne. (DPI/NGO is the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), the central source of information about the UN and its work)

Mission

CoAL's mission is to work towards ending discrimination against lesbians and advocate on behalf of Australian lesbian on many issues and to all levels of government. CoAL aspires to be part of a society where respect for differences, the rule of law, the dignity of all humans and human rights practices are shared.

Objectives

CoAL protects the rights and improves the lives of lesbians in Australia by:

- Monitoring Australian, state, and territory governments, and the public and private sectors to ensure implementation of principles inherent in international covenants, including freedom of speech and rights to association.
- Lobbying for legislative and policy changes to include the women-focused rights of lesbians, including writing submissions to government. (See Appendix A)
- Delivering conference and seminar presentations, seminar participation, community education
- Promoting equitable inclusion of lesbians regardless of race and culture, socio-economic status, ability and health status, age, geographical location, and religion.
- Promoting participation and equity for lesbian women in public, private and community sectors.
- Informing and educating people about lesbian human rights through training, lectures, conferences, workshops, fora, submissions and publications.
- Producing research papers about: lesbian health; violence against lesbians; lesbophobia; and lesbian domestic violence.
- Delivering national and international conference papers on lesbian human rights; lesbians' invisibility in research and policy documents on women's health issues, including mental health, at all levels of government; and discrimination in aged care.
- Encouraging lesbians to represent themselves via their art and other cultural works.

To achieve these objectives and fulfil our United Nations accreditation obligations, CoAL networks internationally, nationally and locally, with other lesbian, women's, and general community groups. It works to identify and promote positive approaches in human rights, social inclusion, youth affairs, health, housing, workforce issues, ageing issues, education, anti-discrimination/equal opportunity, and other areas.

For many years before CoAL was formed, some members of CoAL were involved with researching, advocating on behalf of, and directly supporting lesbians experiencing discrimination and harassment. The current committee includes a Professor Emerita; a retired Associate Professor of Sociology; a retired geneticist with a PhD in Science and Technology Studies and teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages; a lecturer in Social Work in a Rural Health School; and an academically trained social researcher in Women and Gender studies.

SUMMARY OF OUR CONCERNS

This submission sets out three topics of concern to CoAL:

1. Sex
2. Gender and Gender Identity
3. Sexual Orientation

We are highly concerned about the influence of gender identity ideology on government policy and practice, including its influence on the ABS to change established understandings of sex and gender in accordance with gender ideology's overall aim of abolishing sex as a category entirely. We understand that the ABS is being subjected to intensive lobbying by LGBTIQ+ groups and interests (LGBTIQ+ Health Australia 2022). By gender identity ideology, we mean a belief system that is causing individuals and whole populations to suffer from a delusion that it is possible to change one's sex. Sex thus becomes a disembodied concept of sexed identity, called 'gender identity,' and 'gender' is no longer a socially assigned role but, rather, an individual's innate quality (a subjective inner belief claimed to be an 'identity'). That concept takes precedence over biological sex in determining one's true sense of being female or male and in determining one's sexuality. Gender identity ideology is regressive and misogynist, relying on gender stereotypes. It ignores the reality and diversity of the female condition and is effectively undermining the rights of women in Australia.

We are also concerned that the needs/characteristics of LGBTIQ+ should not be treated as an homogeneous group; rather, the statistics should be de-aggregated so as to be able to identify the experiences and needs of each separate component in the LGBTIQ+ grouping, including lesbians. We want to prevent experiences and needs of natal women and men being lost in the statistics. Aggregating demographic data such as sex and gender distorts the experiences, feelings and needs of all in the grouping, thereby becoming not only useless but actually harmful in policy practice.

CoAL is alarmed by the corrosive effects of gender identity ideology that seems to be causing sex to disappear as a data marker that accurately represents the experience of being female and lesbian. Instead, information will be contaminated by responses by and about men who imagine they are women, with potential results such as increased personal insurance premiums for women (due to the poorer life expectancy and driving record of men) and organisations that will no longer need to employ another natal woman while hiding behind a veneer of gender equity and social responsibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The ABS consult with a more diverse representation of lesbians and gays in Australia. ACON, and other TQ+ organisations are highly unrepresentative of lesbians in Australia. It is hoped that greater diversity will reduce policy capture by highly politically

organised and well-funded groups. CoAL, a UN-accredited advocacy organisation for lesbians, would be pleased to work with ABS to help guide future census deliberations.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The ABS to continue to collect information and produce statistics about the topic of sex, using a biological definition of sex as a binary state of being either female or male, with few exceptions, and described in terms of biological reproductive capacity (eg, sexual reproduction organs and function determined genetically and hormonally).

RECOMMENDATION 3

The sex question should remain simple and easily understood: 'What is your sex?'

RECOMMENDATION 4

The ABS re-assess its topic of gender identity, which has been unfairly influenced by gender ideology. This should be done using a more diverse representation of lesbians and gays, as in our Recommendation 1.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Any question(s) on the topic of gender to be separate from any question on the topic of sex.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Questions and information collected about sexual orientation should disaggregate the terms lesbian and gay, as in your alternate standard question on sexual orientation.

TOPICS OF CONCERN

Topic of Concern 1: Sex

Summary of information about sex that CoAL would like the ABS to continue to collect and produce statistics about sex.

Sex is a topic of national importance in the ABS Census collection because information about sex is crucial for identifying and analysing changes and continuity among populations, such as activities, beliefs, economic and other measures of human existence and well-being that can be attributed to sex. Such information enables States and organisations to evaluate the extent to which women and men are exercising and enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms. CoAL that advocates on behalf of lesbians in Australia, finds it extremely helpful to be able to access information about sex to better understand lesbians' various sex-based needs and rights and more effectively advocate on their behalf.

There is ample evidence that biological sex is an important factor affecting people's lives. There are significant differences in experience, opportunities and outcomes between males and females across most aspects of our society. This is why there is no

debate about the need to collect sex as a variable in most, perhaps all, official statistics. As the ONS in the UK states,

“Sex, as biologically determined, is one of the most frequently used and important characteristics the census collects as it is used in most multivariate analysis of data and feeds into the UK population projections. It is critical that the collection of information on gender identity for a small population (estimated to be less than 1%) does not jeopardise the quality of data collected on sex for the population who don’t have trans identities or the protective characteristics of gender reassignment’ (ONS 2021).

We request that the ABS continue to collect information and produce reliable statistics about the topic of sex, using a definition of sex as a binary state of being either female or male, with few exceptions, and described in terms of biological reproductive capacity (ie, sexual reproductive organs and function determined genetically and hormonally). This definition, based on the material reality of the body, conforms to that given by the UN, of sex as ‘the physical and biological characteristics that distinguish males from females’ (UN Women 2020). It should be noted that in Australia, sex is often recorded during pregnancy using various biological markers measured by a range of prenatal technologies and is confirmed at birth using visual and sometimes other technological means that are also biologically based.

In contrast, gender is a variable social, cultural and historical system of expectations and norms that interpret a person’s sex. Any census questions on the topic of gender should be listed separately to avoid confusion. An example is shown below.

Question x

What is your sex?

- Female
- Male
- Intersex
- Other (please specify)

Question xy

Without reference to your reply to question x, how do you prefer to be identified now?

- Female
- Male
- Transwoman
- Transman
- Queer
- Non-binary
- Etc

Question xyz

What is your sexuality?

- Heterosexual (sexually attracted to men)
- Lesbian (sexually attracted to women)
- Other (please specify)

Women (and men) around the world are resisting contemporary efforts to re-define women according to gender identity ideology and therefore erase women as a legal category. For example, today, as a result of women's activism, Kansas became the first state to enact a women's bill of rights that defines women in terms of biology. According to WoLF (2023), the bill contains 'definitions that safeguard the privacy and safety of women and girls. It protects the ability to collect data on sex, and ensures women are treated fairly by courts interpreting sex discrimination laws.' And the UK government is currently deliberating on legislative changes to define women biologically.

The Australian 2021 census, which included a third category as part of the sex question—male, female, and non-binary sex—is a good example of how gender ideology confuses by blurring the boundary between biological reality (male and female sex) and a social construction (non-binary gender). In addition, non-binary gender is relatively unknown and/or understood to a large part of the Australian population, especially older groups and those who have a language other than English.

Analysis of the information collected in the 2021 census led the ABS (2022) to conclude that 'this addition to the sex question did not yield meaningful data.' It seems that, as a result, the ABS has produced a 'Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables (that) provides recommendations on how to ask questions to collect meaningful information on these variables' ABS (2022).

CoAL, however, submits that this ABS Census standard has the potential to further cause confusion due to policy capture by gender identity ideology in its language and concepts. For the 'sex' question, the ABS wants to replace 'sex' with 'sex recorded at birth'—a term promoted by gender ideology to destabilise biological fact and contrast with, and construct, 'gender' as a valid alternative—one that is controlled by the individual rather than their biology, an identity that can 'evolve' and change over time. Available responses to the sex question in the Standard include a third option—'Another term (please specify)'. This allows for respondents who confuse sex with gender and the myriad gender identities that have flourished under the mass delusion of gender identity ideology. As a result, the ABS is participating in the construction of misleading and fictional stories about sex and in widespread policy capture in government departments, policies and legislation. Furthermore, we question the ability to produce meaningful data for what will be a large number of different identities within a small population group who follow gender identity ideology.

The 2020 ABS Standard for Sex provides two definitions of sex:

'Nominal Definition

A person's sex is based on their sex characteristics, such as their chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. While typically based on their sex characteristics observed and recorded at birth or infancy, a person's reported sex can change over the course of their lifetime and may differ from their sex recorded at birth.'

'Operational Definition

Sex recorded at birth refers to what was determined by sex characteristics observed at birth or infancy. This is an important indicator for statistical analysis in births and deaths, health statistics, calculating fertility rates and deriving counts for cis and trans populations.'

'A collection may instead ask for a person's sex at the time of completing a survey, rather than their sex recorded at birth. However, there are advantages of sex recorded at birth as the sex question and further data that can be derived when using sex recorded at birth as the sex question.'

CoAL accepts that part of the Nominal Definition of sex that is grounded in the biological reality of the body. However, we reject your standard for this topic because it appears strongly influenced by gender identity ideology, which will lead to confusion and unreliable data collection. The first category—'nominal definition'—implies that sex is not grounded in biological fact or material reality, but just a convention that can be flouted at any time. This is a huge injustice to women and girls. The second category—'operational definition'—retains a token understanding of the importance of sex characteristics but is contradicted by a logically confused acceptance of gender identity ideology that sex is merely an identity ('cis') that has been used to construct gender identity as an alternative ('trans'). Sex becomes a question about paperwork rather than a person's biological body.

Moreover, while there is a large number of Australians who object to being asked 'what is your gender' instead of 'what is your sex?' (and we are pleased to note that your standard sex question asks the latter), we are sure there are even more Australians who object to being assigned a 'cis' identity and many would have never heard of it. Disappointingly, finding the term 'cis' in your standards demonstrates the extent of policy capture within the ABS, and the role you are, perhaps unwittingly, playing in spreading genetic identity dogma. The term, paired in contrast to 'trans identity,' should never be used in a census question as it would be an example of compelled speech, forcing respondents to use a term and concept that many do not believe in or agree with, and forces one to agree with the concept that one's sex is an identity.

We understand that members of gender identity lobby groups aim to eliminate sex as a category. For example, ACON's Australian Workplace Equality Index AWEI gives full points on Section 17 of their questionnaire to participating organisations if they remove 'gender options' (by which they mean 'sex options') from their data-collection systems. The distinction between data records for individual use and for official statistics must be properly understood and maintained, so that personal preference does not drive recorded data about sex.

Information about sex is vital in the provision of sex-disaggregated data, which is 'data that is cross-classified by sex, presenting information separately for men and women, boys and girls. Sex-disaggregated data reflect roles, real situations, general conditions of women and children, girls and boys in every aspect of society ... When data is not disaggregated by sex, it is more difficult to identify real and potential inequalities (UN Women 2020).

According to Article 1 of the WDI (Women's Declaration International), sex must be of central concern to states in terms of women's right to be free from discrimination (WDI n.d.). WDI's Article 1 affirms that one way to do this is to retain the definition of a woman as an adult female human, a lesbian as an adult female human whose sexual orientation is towards other female humans, the category of mother to mean a female parent, and the exclusion of men who claim to have a female gender' from these categories.

Furthermore, the conflation of sex with gender identity leads to the collection of inaccurate and misleading data on a range of issues relevant to lesbians, such as violence against women and girls, because it identifies the perpetrators by their gender identity rather than sex. An Australian example is that of the 7-11 axe attack in Sydney by Evie Amati, a transgender identified man. Newspaper reports used feminine pronouns to describe him. Moreover, he was housed in a women's prison, where the inmates complained and fought with him. Later, it was reported he had 'detransitioned.' Amati was recorded as female in media, court documents and for the purpose of incarceration (Sutton 2019, R v Amati [2019] NSWDC 3). This and other similar cases, significantly hinders the development of effective laws, policies, strategies and actions aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls. In addition, sex-disaggregated data is necessary for detecting the widely discussed increase in older women's homelessness, or for understanding the nature of families living in poverty.

Sex is a topic of national importance for the purpose of setting and guiding accurate and effective policies and practices of governments and other organisations. It is a key variable that provides information about reliable and accurate sex-based differences in a range of areas, such as health, housing, and economics. For too long, men have been the standard for statistical collections, but now sex-based differences are more recognised as crucial variables (eg, see Zucker & Prendergast 2020).

For continuity of understanding of the lives of lesbians, there is a continuing need for data on the topic of sex and it is imperative that the topic of sex be maintained in census collections and not confused with, or replaced by, gender.

CoAL depends on reliable information on sex in the census collections to research and gain an understanding of the position of lesbians and other women and girls within Australian society, and compared with those elsewhere around the world. CoAL uses information about sex to prepare submissions and advocate at State, national and international levels for changes to improve the position of lesbians in Australia.

Topic of Concern 2: Gender and Gender Identity

The topic of gender and gender identity is of current national importance because gender identity has become a highly controversial and confusing topic; the term is based on illogical concepts that adherents refuse to debate. However, data on reported gender and gender identity would help researchers, governments and other organisations to gain a more accurate understanding of the demographic spread of beliefs in gender identity ideology. This would enable them to better evaluate claims by gender identity ideologues that universalise gender identity.

There is a need for data on gender and gender identity at the national level, as well as for States and Territories, which have been enthusiastically passing legislation that replaces sex with gender that is eroding women's sex-based rights, with scant consultation with many women's groups who do not ascribe to gender identity ideology. Data on gender is also needed for small population groups of 'detransitioners' and 'desisters.' Such data would be extremely helpful for research and policy setting because legal claims by desisters and detransitioners against health professionals, educators, governments, etc will increase with increasing knowledge and experiences of the harmful effects of surgical and medical procedures in 'transgender medicine', education, and law.

There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic of gender, and gender identity, because long-term trends in gender identity beliefs and the effects of 'transgender medicine' are little understood. The data will be useful for research as well as policy setting.

Early indications of problems collecting census information about gender identity appeared overseas with the 2021 Census of England and Wales, which was the first in the world to collect information on gender identity from an entire population. That experience provided 'lessons in how not to formulate a question on gender identity.' (Biggs 2023) Biggs found that the data on gender identity caused confusion in respondents, especially in those with a main language other than English. He questioned the Australian 2021 the validity of the Census data because he was able to identify an implausible geographical distribution of responses that did not agree with other survey information. Australia experienced problems also when it added a gender question to the sex question in the 2021 census (see 'Topic of Concern 1: Sex' above).

The 2026 Australian census aims to include gender in the sex question. This should be done with greater care than has been taken so far. The standards that conform with existing Australian government guidelines, are already the result of policy capture by gender identity ideology (Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender 2015). Moreover, answering questions in the Australian census is compulsory, unlike the England and Wales census that is voluntary and restricted to people aged 16 years and over. This makes the Australian gender question on sexual identity a case of compelled speech if an entire population is forced to acquiesce to language based on gender-identity ideology, consciously or unconsciously. Those of us who do not believe in gender ideology are therefore caught in the dilemma of entrapment within a situation of conflicting circumstances that threaten legal penalties:

we're obliged to answer questions (section 14 of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*) but we're also obliged to give accurate and truthful information (section 15 of the same Act).

We request that the ABS re-assess its topic of gender identity, which has been unfairly influenced by gender ideology reflected in the views of organisations and their representatives, such as ACON, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, Australian Research Centre in Ex, Health and Society. They are highly organised and sufficiently well-funded to present a façade of consensus of opinion that is far from the reality of ordinary lesbians and other homosexuals. Their undue influence on the ABS has already caused significant problems for the 2021 Census collection. Sullivan (2021) has analysed the UK 2021 census, to conclude with similar views to CoAL on the Australian census, that there has been a 'politicisation of the definition of sex,' arguing 'that the ONS gave undue weight to lobby groups with a particular viewpoint on sex and gender identity'.

CoAL agrees with the ABS that information on 'gender identity' is an important topic and should be collected, because we contend it is a mistaken belief that needs to be understood demographically. We have special concerns with the use of the concept of gender identity to confuse and negate a lesbian's understanding of her sex (see our Concern 1 Sex) and sexual orientation (see our Concern 4 Sexual Orientation).

We are a national advocacy organisation for lesbians and use information about lesbians to prepare submissions at State, national and international levels. We also need data on needs and needs of lesbians who belong to minority groups in Australia (eg, , Aboriginal, refugees, migrants, religious groups, etc).

Topic of Concern 3: Sexual Orientation

CoAL defines sexual orientation as the way a person experiences sexual attraction to other humans, for example, a lesbian sexual orientation is the way a woman is attracted to other women. There are three components of sexual orientation: attraction, behaviour, and identity. A woman may be sexually attracted to another woman without ever enacting her sexual preference. Or she may become sexually involved with another woman (ie behaviour). This is a particularly important aspect of sexual orientation, as it can involve either risk (eg the risk of transferring health problems, such as bacterial vaginitis), or protection (eg emotional or financial back-up). Identity, the third component of lesbian sexual orientation (ie, strongly identifying with 'the lesbian community') may, but does not necessarily, follow from attraction and behaviour. (Fingerhut et al. 2005)

CoAL uses, and is proud of, the word 'lesbian' to describe sexual orientation between women. We reject the label 'queer' and other epithets based on gender identity ideology. We are not part of 'LGBTIQ+', frequently used as a shorthand for an apparent community. The problem with this shorthand is that it brings together several highly divergent groups. The Intersex group has already left the acronym because 'intersex I not a part of the trans umbrella ... nor is intersex a form of gender diversity because intersex is not about gender, or transition. Intersex is about bodies: about congenital

physical differences in sex characteristics. (IHRA, 2011) And there are LGB Alliance groups in Australia and elsewhere that have broken away from the TQ groups.

CoAL notes that the tandard sexual orientation question combines women with men in Q 2 ('Gay or lesbian') We fail to understand, and strongly disagree with, this aggregation, which appears influenced by the LGBTQ+ lobby groups. We can assure ABS that there are many lesbians who do not align with or identify as 'gay', because of, for example, historical discrimination against lesbians by gay groups. We are surprised therefore that you then offer an 'alternative' Standard, which does disaggregate lesbian and gay. However, other nonsense terms ('Pansexual' and 'Queer') associated with gender identity ideology are also added. Lesbians are a heterogeneous group with a wide range of sexual politics, which is reflected in our language. Lesbians therefore may use a variety of identifying terms, such as lesbian, gay, queer or pansexual. Because answering the census is compulsory, it is important that respondents have suitable terms to select. Their aggregation or absence constitutes compelled speech and would jeopardise collection of reliable information..

The topic of sexual orientation is of current national importance because this sub-groups of the population is of interest to policy makers and researchers from a range of areas, including health, education, law, employment and social welfare. Moreover, the Australian population has demonstrated a willingness to answer such questions, such as in the ABS General Social Surveys of 2014, 2019 and 2020 (Vandenbroek 2022). As stigma is still associated with homosexuality among some cultural and religious individuals and groups in Australia, it is imperative that privacy of respondents is respected. It is gratifying to read that the ABS Standard questions on this topic have been prepared in accordance with the [Australian Privacy Principles](#) (Privacy Act 1988).

Lesbians are an important topic in the census because they are a distinct group within the sex class 'woman,' and have particular needs not experienced by others in the LGBTQ+ group. Globally, women suffer the highest rates of murder of any group. In 2018, 50,000 women were murdered by intimate partners and family (Cole 2018 in Vortex p. 207). The figures on lesbians are not easily obtainable because lesbians are ignored. In her book *Vortex: The Crisis of Patriarchy* (2020), author Susan Hawthorne details the violence meted out to lesbians (see especially pp. 155-158). Corrective rape – rape of lesbians intended to coerce them to become heterosexual – is at very high levels in South Africa and many other places around the world. Torture and murder of lesbians is widespread in many countries especially those that have discriminatory laws against lesbians. While this high level of risk is not the case in Australia, it has an impact on the lives of lesbians. And, very frequently, lesbians are simply erased when research projects are undertaken. Given the threats that are being made by the transgender lobby against any woman who speaks up for women and lesbians, supporting the transgender ideology has a chilling effect on lesbians and lesbian culture (Victorian Women's Guild n.d.).

There is a need for data on sexual orientation at the national and local level in order to identify and meet lesbians' specific needs (eg, health, addiction, victims of violence, prejudice and discrimination, aged care services). Studies have shown that lesbians

'experience higher levels of discrimination, stigma, and stress and are at higher risk of some poor health outcomes and health behaviours compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Jackson et al 2016). Researchers and health educators need information about lesbians and their health (American Cancer Society 2022). Workplace discrimination depends on accurate population data (AHRC 2007). Attention is also being drawn to the particular needs of lesbians using aged care services (Matrix Guild (Vic) Inc (2008, 2009)). Provided privacy is protected, census surveys should also enable collection of answers to questions about sexual orientation among small population groups where the topic is still stigmatised because of religious and cultural beliefs. This would be invaluable in CoAL's advocacy work.

An area of particular concern to CoAL, and to lesbians worldwide, is the loss of women-only space due to the spread of gender identity ideology and the resulting erosion of women's sex-based rights. It is no longer possible to publicly hold a women-only gathering for lesbians because there will invariably be an expensive legal challenge by transgender rights activists demanding access. Australian examples include the current Tickle v Giggle case being fought in the Federal Court. Sall Grover refused membership of Giggle for Girls, a women-only dating app, to Roxanne Tickle, a man who identifies as a lesbian transgender woman. Sall was trying to protect the female members of the dating app from sexual predation. Tickle proceeded to sue the organisation for alleged discrimination and is demanding complete access ('Transgender woman sues female-only app' 2022, Wyatt 2022). An older court case is that of the holding of a lesbian festival and conference in Victoria in 2004. Despite gaining approval for an exemption from the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act 1995, on the grounds that lesbians had a specific culture and specific needs as lesbians that needed to be discussed in a lesbian-only environment, an application for revocation of the exemption was lodged by a transgender activists demanding access. As a result, the event was cancelled because of the organisers fears of the high cost of litigation. Since then, lesbians in Australia have been deprived of public spaces for lesbians to gather, essentially being forced 'back into the closet'.

There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic of sexual orientation because lesbians (and other women) are increasingly suffering from the loss of our human rights to freedom from sex-base discrimination and sexual harassment, and rights to freedom of assembly. CoAL requires such data in order to advocate for lesbian rights and needs.

CoAL is a national advocacy organisation for lesbians. We need and use information about lesbians to understand the needs of lesbians in Australia in order to prepare submissions at State, national and international levels. We also need data on needs and needs of lesbians who belong to minority groups in Australia (eg, , Aboriginal, refugees, migrants, religious groups, etc)

Lesbians and other women are under attack. We need organisations like the ABS to work with us, not against us.

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