



HD **Being Me**

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LP

The story of girls and boys, born in the wrong body and their struggle to be who they are.

Monday 17th November 2014

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There are any number of self help books that will tell you how to find yourself.

But what if truly being yourself involved changing your gender? Would you have the courage to do it?

Eleven-year-old Isabelle does. To the world she looked like a young boy. But she knew that she was really a girl, and a year ago she told her parents the way she felt.

This week Four Corners reporter Janine Cohen tells Isabelle's story and the story of the family, the doctor and ultimately the community that backed her decision to truly be herself.

Along the way we meet other people who've confronted the same feelings and discover that a growing and significant number of children are finding themselves in the same situation. Some find support from their parents and doctors. Others discover fear, prejudice and a legal system that doesn't make it easy for them to be themselves.

For Isabelle, the decision to tell her story was not made lightly. She and her parents tell Four Corners that they are willing to speak about their experience so that others won't feel alone and other transgender children can be helped and protected.

Doctors tell the program that trying to repress the feeling that you are trapped in the wrong body simply does not work. Instead, it can lead to self harm and even suicide.

Paediatricians also make it clear that timing is important. They explain that if children want to make a physical change, then treatment should begin at puberty. In that way, hormone treatments can be prescribed with far better results.

A senior judge tells Four Corners she is keen to see the law relating to transgender treatment tested sooner rather than later.

Meanwhile, doctors and families warn the current legal situation is putting some children at risk.

Isabelle's story is remarkable and inevitably raises many questions for families, doctors and society in general. Ultimately though, it's a journey that shows courage and honesty is essential to triumph over ignorance. It's a story that is not to be missed.

BEING ME, reported by Janine Cohen and presented by Kerry O'Brien, goes to air on Monday 17th November at 8.30pm. It is replayed on Tuesday 18th November at 11.00am and 11.35pm. It can also be seen on Saturday at 8.00pm, and at .

Transcript

Being Me - 17th November 2014

KERRY O'BRIEN, PRESENTER: Having the strength to embrace who you are.

Welcome to Four Corners.

You don't set out to measure these things but I can't think of a more powerfully poignant story that I've introduced than this one.

Nor can I think of one more capable of suspending prejudice and creating understanding. It's about transgender children, the potential nightmare they have to confront, the lives that hang in the balance and a special **brand** of courage that is ultimately inspirational.

It involves first and foremost children, then their parents, skilful and dedicated health professionals and a more understanding court system. This is a very real social issue, more than you might think and one we can only reveal because people were prepared to put themselves on the line in an utterly compelling way.

There are three stories here of two girls trapped in male bodies and a boy who started life as a girl, the reporter is Janine Cohen.

ANDREW LANGLEY, ISABELLE'S FATHER: What do you want for breakfast Isabelle?

ISABELLE LANGLEY, TRANSGENDER: May I please have some Vegemite crumpets.

ANDREW LANGLEY: And what do you want on your crumpets?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Um...

ANDREW LANGLEY: Do you want vegemite?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Ah, yes please.

HATTIE LANGLEY, DAUGHTER: Yeah definitely needs and another mix...

NAOMI MCNAMARA, ISABELLE'S MOTHER: I know.

HATTIE LANGLEY: ...and another one minute and then maybe another one minute.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: This is supposed to take 90 seconds in the microwave you know, that's how you're supposed to eat it.

(Sound of Hattie laughing)

You eat it when it's rock hard

JANINE COHEN, REPORTER: The Langley home is busy in the mornings.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Have you got the **milk** out?

ANDREW LANGLEY: Yeah I've got the **milk** out.

JANINE COHEN: The family live in Taggerty, a small rural hamlet, 100 kilometres north east of Melbourne.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Yeah it's pretty noisy and chaotic (laughs) as a general rule.

(Isabelle feeds animals)

(to children) You all go the same day?

HATTIE LANGLEY: Yeah.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: ...to the practice?

HATTIE LANGLEY: Yeah.

ANDREW LANGLEY: Yeah.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Where... have you got a note?

HATTIE LANGLEY: Yeah.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Well, where is it?

JANINE COHEN: Naomi's a social worker.

ANDREW LANGLEY: Is... is that the best condition it can be in?

JANINE COHEN: And Andrew runs their bed and breakfast.

(Sound of children talking)

ANDREW LANGLEY: Talent quest.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: That's different.

ANDREW LANGLEY: You think you've got the morning under control, everyone's up early and something always go and falls off... off the wagon.

ANDREW LANGLEY: Though this morning you're running a bit late...

HATTIE LANGLEY: So was I!

ANDREW LANGLEY: Haven't had a shower yet?

HATTIE LANGLEY: So am I!

ANDREW LANGLEY: No.

JANINE COHEN: The couple have two children.

Hattie's eight and Isabelle's eleven.

ANDREW LANGLEY: Oh they're best of friends, best of friends. I think Hattie really adores Isabelle. She's looked up to her since she was really, you know as long as I can remember.

(To children) Here you go.

Always imitated Isabelle whenever they were playing.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Okay, table.

ANDREW LANGLEY: They're sisters, they have the best of fights too (laughs), they get on each other's nerves at times.

JANINE COHEN: Do you girls always get along or do you fight sometimes?

HATTIE LANGLEY: We fight a little, but not all the time.

JANINE COHEN: What do you fight about Isabelle?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Um... lots of things.

HATTIE LANGLEY: Like sometimes if Isabelle um, keeps my Barbie box - the Barbie box - open in my room.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: No one even said that you got to keep it anyway.

HATTIE LANGLEY: It's both of ours and I don't like Barbie, so.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: You don't like them?

HATTIE LANGLEY: So you can put it in your room - decision made.

(Girls shake hands)

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Creepy.

(Hattie and Isabelle cleaning their teeth)

JANINE COHEN: Hattie and Isabelle both have bright futures

But one sibling may have a few more challenges than the other .

As one was born a boy.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: There was probably a couple of months where she'd started a conversation with me saying I just feel weird, I don't feel right.

JANINE COHEN: But nothing prepared Naomi for what her son was about to tell her.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Just... yeah said to me... I don't, I don't like my body, I don't feel right in my body. And I said well you know, what do you mean? And I think I started off on a tangent and said oh well you know lots of kids feel that way and um... it's you know normal to feel all weird in your body and your body's growing and all of those sorts of things, completely jumping to the wrong conclusion and she said no I feel like I'm a girl, I'm in the wrong body.

JANINE COHEN: This was within weeks of their son Campbell turning 10.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I just said to my mum that I didn't wanna be boy, I felt like a girl and that I'm sick of living in this body.

JANINE COHEN: Was it making you sad?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: A little.

JANINE COHEN: And how did mum and dad react?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Well my mum was rather calm about it, so was my dad.

ANDREW LANGLEY: I think it is a bit of an emotional roller coaster. I sort of initially my thoughts were for Campbell then, it's oh geez what's life going to deal, um you know... there's just going to be barriers, are these barriers you really going to want to put up with?

NAOMI MCNAMARA: We'd had conversations, Campbell he may end up being gay when he grows up and you know we were kind of prepared for that.

I had these sort of little images of you know standing with a rainbow flag and you know, I was all for it, it was going to be great.

When Isabelle told me that night I sort of... Andrew and I sort of said why couldn't she have just been gay (laughs) it would have been a lot easier than this, at that time that's what we'd sort of felt, and obviously they're two completely separate things.

JANINE COHEN: Campbell was born on 6 June 2003. And from a toddler he always preferred girl's things.

(to Isabelle) Did you ever like boy's things?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Never. My entire life I've used traditional girl's toys.

ANDREW LANGLEY: I love sport, could not get Campbell into sport at all. We had Lego and Matchbox cars had not interest in them. As soon as we're home from anywhere, straight into dress up, straight into either a mermaid tail or a Cinderella dress or fairy wings.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I tried stopping it but I couldn't really.

JANINE COHEN: Did you fight against it for a little while?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I was trying to. I didn't really know there was anything to do about it. I started looking up things.

JANINE COHEN: Where did you look them up?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Just on the internet. I just looked up what to do if you feel like a girl and I found all these websites and they were saying that you're able to get special surgery and that you can actually come out that way and I found some videos too about some other children feeling that way.

HOST: She's here in person, tonight. So say hello to Jazz.

(Sound of applause)

JANINE COHEN: It was American transgender girl Jazz Jennings who made the biggest impression.

JAZZ JENNINGS, TRANSGENDER: Thank you so much, Kids and teens out there, I just want them to know that it is okay to step out of your shadows and just be who you are. Just be true to yourself and express yourself.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: She had tears in her eyes like she just said... oh, you know I'm just so glad I saw that. Like it was, she felt less alone and just came with... just a million questions came out of that for her. Um and she watched it over and over again.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: It's made me realise that there was ways to sort of cope.

JANINE COHEN: And before you saw Jazz, did you not know?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I didn't think there was anything to do about it.

JANINE COHEN: What was it like when you realised you could do something?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I felt very happy then and I told my mum that night.

JANINE COHEN: After the initial high, Isabelle started to get very down.

Children can be most vulnerable between the time of coming out and getting treatment.

ANDREW LANGLEY: It took three or four weeks to go through it but just see how upset she was, she would come home miserable. I don't see a future for myself I remember her saying one night.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: She'd been crying and we'd been having a discussion and she was upset so much at the time at that point in time and she said I just I can't and just whispered like I just can't see what the future looks like for me.

And that was awful (begins to get upset) and that like I just. I think for me that was the point where the confusion kind of melted away a little bit and you just sort of think well God we've only got one job here and this is to help her create a future that she can live with, that she can thrive in and um... yeah.

JANINE COHEN: How hard would it be if you had parents who didn't support you?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: If that actually happened, I'd probably have run away by now, or killed myself.

(Isabelle reading to dad in bed)

Studies show 30 per cent of young people who don't get treatment attempt suicide and 50 per cent self harm.

ANDREW LANGLEY: One of the first things I came across was this high rate of suicide in children who have this issue and I think that put a bit of fear into me and it was like oh well, no, hang on, I've got a happy child. I'm... this can't be.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I love you.

ANDREW LANGLEY: Love you.

I'm not going to do anything that's going to you know make sure she does have a long and happy life.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX, TRANSGENDER: I haven't had an easy life.

(Extract of Paige on X Factor reality TV show)

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: Hi guys how are you going?

RONAN KEATING, JUDGE: Hello.

NATALIE BASSINGTHWAIGHTE, JUDGE: Good. How are you?

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: Very well thank you.

RONAN KEATING: What's your name?

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: My name is Paige Elliott Phoenix.

JANINE COHEN: Paige Elliott Phoenix is a transgender man who came out on X Factor.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: So I'm a female to male transsexual.

RONAN KEATING: Wow, okay.

(Sound of cheering and applause from audience)

JANINE COHEN: What Paige didn't share with the audience that night was his struggle just to survive.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: (singing) I told you if we could fly, because we all have wings and some of us don't know why. I was standing.

(Photographs of Paige as a child)

JANINE COHEN: When Paige was young she didn't know she was transgender.

Back then many of these kids were treated as if they had a mental disorder.

ROB LYONS, DR, PSYCHIATRIST: Psychotherapy was seen as the way of curing um, um and people were put through this process against their will and we all know that psychotherapy against will doesn't work anyway and in fact that process I think scarred a lot of the trans people of the 60s and 70s, and perhaps even 80s.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: Home sweet home.

JANINE COHEN: Backstage, Paige Elliot Phoenix is getting ready to perform at a transgender health conference.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: I know, my secret is out, trans men wear foundation (laughs).

JANINE COHEN: Paige has come a long way since the confusing and traumatic years of his childhood. His parents tried to get their child to conform.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: It started with gentle encouragement to you know to start to conform to which I just bucked massively and then I guess the older I got the more pressure was being applied the more that I rebelled and made life very difficult for my parents.

JANINE COHEN: Since the age of 11, Paige lived in numerous foster homes, shelters and even on the street.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: We couldn't find a way out of it, we couldn't find a way to understand what was happening and my folks just did have the skill set to be able to deal with it.

JANINE COHEN: It wasn't until Paige was 32, after searching the internet, he discovered he was transgender. His parents had no idea.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: If we had known what was going on you know, um, it could have been dealt with really differently. If my parents had of been able to access some support around it, it could have been really different. I honestly believe they did the best they could with what they had.

JANINE COHEN: Seven years ago Paige had chest surgery.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: It's shocking how many people when you consider the stats with the major population how many of our community are in that much pain and suffering that much. For young trans boys of the terror of breasts growing, of a menstrual cycle starting, which you know is just on every level so wrong for them and not natural for them.

JANINE COHEN: Four Corners has spoken to young transgender men, who before treatment, bound their breasts, and even stabbed them.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: We've had very little time to rehearse so we're going to be winging a fair bit of it um.

JANINE COHEN: To help keep his masculine appearance, Paige injects himself every 10 days with testosterone.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: I was a 56 kilogram female, and hairless. I'm now an 85 kilogram bear um (laughs).

ROB LYONS: So a person that transitions on testosterone late will be basically be appearing as your average male within twelve to 18 months and probably would have deepened his voice within three.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: Yeah just stick with your ethereal kind of... what your were doing in rehearsal for... going for that lyric it was great.

JANINE COHEN: Tonight Paige is singing a duet with transgender woman, Coco.

COCO, TRANSGENDER: Bad dress rehearsal means good show?

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: That's right (laughs) let's hope. Let's go beautiful.

COCO: Let's go. Okay. Good luck (kisses).

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: And to you

COCO: Opps lipstick. Yep

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: Alright.

JANINE COHEN: Paige contacted his mother recently hoping for a reunion.

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: The reply was I think the sentence that stuck out was to see you as you are breaks my heart. Yeah so it was like, ouch, okay yep.

And it kind of, I kind of a hit a point with it where I was like yeah you know what holding this... even just holding this space for you and waiting, waiting for you is breaking my heart.

(Paige and Coco on stage singing)

PAIGE ELLIOT PHOENIX: (singing) I changed my face and I changed my name...but no one wants you when you lose...

COCO: (singing) Don't give up, 'cause you have a friend. Don't give up, you're not beaten yet.

JANINE COHEN: Back in Melbourne, Isabelle is making one of her regular visits to the gender clinic at the Royal Children's Hospital.

ANDREW LANGLEY: We're here.

JANINE COHEN: It was here 12 months ago that she was first assessed.

The numbers of children presenting at clinics around Australia have skyrocketed.

MICHELLE TELFER, PAEDIATRICIAN, ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, VIC: So we've had a huge increase in new referrals to the Royal Children's Hospital from one in 2003, to a hundred new referrals just this year. And this is replicated across the western world, so the same numbers are being seen across America, across Europe.

(to Langley family) Oh hello. Come through. Hi Isabelle how are you, you well?

JANINE COHEN: Doctors like Michelle Telfer don't think there's more transgender kids than 10 years ago, they just coming out and accessing treatment much earlier.

MICHELLE TELFER: What's changed is that people are feeling safe to come forward because of social change, but they are also becoming aware that we have treatments that can help them. And that's something that's only been around for about 15 years around the world, and probably only 10 years here in Australia.

JANINE COHEN: It's often difficult to diagnose children before puberty as their gender can be fluid.

MICHELLE TELFER: That's the reason that we don't use any medical interventions until puberty has started because the evidence shows that if you look at the number of children in early childhood who show gender non-conforming behaviour, only about 25 per cent of those children will identify as transgender in adolescence.

JANINE COHEN: Many of the children will later identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Some will be heterosexual.

MICHELLE TELFER: Once someone has gone into puberty and I know Isabelle isn't quite there yet, but if she reaches puberty, and she's still identifying strongly as female, we know it's not a phase. There's a 99.5 per cent chance she's going to persist with that female gender identity.

(to Isabelle) So Isabelle do you have any questions for me?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: How do hormone blockers work?

MICHELLE TELFER: That's a very good question.

JANINE COHEN: Isabelle's anxious to start the first stage of her medical treatment - puberty blocking hormones.

MICHELLE TELFER: Now the good thing about the drug is it gives you time to think about what you want to do in the long term, without you having to worry about your voice dropping or getting hairy or any of those sorts of things.

If you decided in a couple of years time, so you are 11 now, say you were 13, 14, or 15 and you thought, you know I don't want to be a female, I'm going to go back to being Campbell, then we can stop the Zoladex.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: That won't happen, trust me (laughs).

MICHELLE TELFER: No, you know what, I don't think that will happen either. But if it does and it's really important to know that you can make this decision if it does happen we can stop this drug and your body goes back to how it would have been with no long term consequences.

JANINE COHEN: Dr Telfer takes regular blood samples so she will know when Isabelle is on the cusp of puberty and ready for blockers.

MICHELLE TELFER: Do you have any more questions about the blockers?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: What was that word called again?

MICHELLE TELFER: This one?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Yeah

MICHELLE TELFER: Gonadotropin-releasing hormones.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Gonadotropin-releasing hormone.

MICHELLE TELFER: Gosh you could get a job here.

(Family laughs)

ISABELLE LANGLEY: It's hard to say.

MICHELLE TELFER: That's fantastic.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: It's almost longer... that's almost longer than Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.

MICHELLE TELFER: Yep almost.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: It's almost longer.

MICHELLE TELFER: Well done.

JANINE COHEN: Ten years ago children like Isabelle didn't have access to this treatment and would have developed masculine features.

MICHELLE TELFER: And testosterone is the hormone that makes someone look like a man, alright. So it makes... gives you a hairy face like your dad, and you get hairy legs and hairy arms...

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Like him again?

(Everyone laughs)

(Assoc Professor Dr Campbell Paul enters consultation)

CAMPBELL PAUL, PSYCHIATRIST, ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL VIC : G'day.

MICHELLE TELFER: Hello Campbell.

ANDREW LANGLEY: How are you?

MICHELLE TELFER: Thanks for coming in and joining us.

CAMPBELL PAUL: Pleasure.

(To Isabelle) How are you?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I'm good.

CAMPBELL PAUL: Good.

JANINE COHEN: Associate Professor Campbell Paul is Isabelle's psychiatrist.

With help from Dr Paul, 10 months ago Isabelle started living completely as a girl.

CAMPBELL PAUL: So are all the other kids using Isabelle or..?

(Isabelle nods)

JANINE COHEN: Before children are given puberty blocking treatment they're assessed by at least five doctors.

CAMPBELL PAUL: The process for the assessment is very rigorous. There is a team of us that are involved um, and in the first instance it's a psychiatrist and an adolescent physician or an endocrinologist and we get a detailed assessment from the family.

(Dr Telfer weighs and measures Isabelle)

MICHELLE TELFER: Alright just jump on here,

As doctors, every decision we make on a clinical basis is about weighing up the risks versus the benefits. And in this case what we have is a risk of self-harm and suicide that is extremely high, and yet a risk of regret that is very small.

MICHELLE TELFER: We'll do your height next, good girl. That's it.

JANINE COHEN: Until recently Isabelle and her family would have been legally bound to go to the Family Court to get approval for puberty blockers.

That all changed after another family took on the court.

JAMIE, TRANSGENDER: I know how, how hard it is was, how stressful it was for my parents and how much work it was and I am just so thankful to them for going through all that for me and for all the kids who are transsexual who now don't have to go to court for that.

JANINE COHEN: The Family Court forbids the identification of all children and their families who go before it.

For this reason, Four Corners has gone to great lengths to disguise Jamie and her mother using facial prosthetics and digitally altering their voices.

JAMIE: I don't want to be pixelated cause that would kind of be like I'm ashamed and I'm not ashamed. I just need, just my identity is private for the moment.

JAMIE: Hi.

ALISON: Hello love.

JAMIE: How's your day?

ALISON: It was lovely how was yours?

(Jamie and mother embrace)

JANINE COHEN: Jamie's family challenged the Family Court's jurisdiction to approve medical treatment of transgender children.

ALISON: Did you get your assignment in?

JAMIE: Yes.

ALISON: Good.

JANINE COHEN: From the time he could walk, Jamie never identified as anything else but a girl.

JAMIE: It was very gradual cause at the start I was just wearing girly dress ups at my house and then I would go outside in the wide world just as a boy, but gradually I started to change things a bit like growing my hair longer, trying to wear boy's clothes in a girlish way.

JANINE COHEN: Primary school was terrible.

JAMIE: The teachers didn't understand. There were some really mean kids.

ALISON: I think school became very difficult for her because school is very gendered and to have to fit into the role of a boy was extremely difficult for her. She would come home from school saying 'Mum I go to school disguised as a boy and it's so hard trying to be a boy'.

And that language is very indicative of the deep understanding of herself as female. When she was around about seven she started to say suicidal things.

JANINE COHEN: Like what?

ALISON: Um, I wish I was dead. Essentially, and that's a devastating thing to hear as a parent of a child whose very young so we knew that it was time to really do something.

JANINE COHEN: Until the talk of suicide, Alison thought her child may have just been going through a phase.

Now, she knew she had to do more to help her.

ALISON: I love her with every fibre of my being. She's very insightful, she's very clear, she's not precocious so I believe her and I've believed her all along that she's needed to do this. It's been difficult but because she is so true to herself she needed at least one person to have her back and because she is the amazing person that she is she's got way more than one person.

(Jamie singing at piano)

JAMIE: Pretty, pretty please don't you ever ever feel that your less than, less than perfect.

JANINE COHEN: Watching her daughter's back, has come at a cost.

ALISON: I did come across other parents at the first Primary School who were outraged by my support of Jamie.

JANINE COHEN: Why?

ALISON: Ah I think they thought that I was doing it to her, for I don't know what reason um... perhaps they thought that I had wanted a daughter, um... and that's not the case.

JANINE COHEN: How natural does it feel to be a girl?

JAMIE: Very natural. The same as you would feel being a girl 'cause you just are a girl and there's nothing else to it.

JANINE COHEN: What would your life be like if you couldn't be who you are?

JAMIE: It would be very dark, very bleak and very short.

JANINE COHEN: Short?

JAMIE: Yeah, very short.

(Jamie and Alison clothes shopping)

ALISON: Jamie. These ones.

JAMIE: Oh yeah. That's awesome.

ALISON: I love that.

JAMIE: Its cute.

ALISON: That's gorgeous.

JANINE COHEN: Three years ago, Jamie needed puberty blocking treatment.

Her mother was alarmed to learn it would cost about \$30,000 to go to the Family Court to get approval for it.

JAMIE: Ah hah look at that.

JANINE COHEN: Australia is the only jurisdiction in the world that requires a court to approve these treatments.

ALISON: Unfortunately, that's created a really, really awful situation for young people who are transgender and it means that a lot of children are not able to access treatment in good time or even before they're 18 because they simply can't get access to lawyers and justice.

ALISON: It's a lovely colour.

JAMIE: It is.

ALISON: Isn't it?

JAMIE: It is.

JANINE COHEN: At the time blood tests showed that Jamie was very close to puberty and her voice was about to break.

ALISON: What do you think?

JAMIE: It's actually pretty good.

ALISON: That's actually really nice isn't it?

JAMIE: It is.

JANINE COHEN: To protect Jamie, her mother didn't tell her how close she was to physically changing.

Michelle Telfer recently became Jamie's Paediatrician.

MICHELLE TELFER: Her puberty caused significant distress, significant. And starting the puberty blockers for Jamie was a form of medical emergency for her, because she knew that once her voice broke she could never get by in a body that's congruent with her female gender identity.

ALISON: Perfect colour isn't it?

JANINE COHEN: In the mean time unable to find the money for court, Alison went begging to law firms to act free on their behalf.

One agreed.

ALISON: Otherwise I do not know what we would have done. We are not wealthy people and we could not have afforded it. If that's the case then your child misses out on treatment that's going to improve their lives incredibly and going to give them a future that they can happily walk into rather than a future that they're scared of and that they don't want.

MICHELLE TELFER: Unfortunately what the consequences of these decisions have been is that it's affected those who aren't in the court. So the rest of the transgender population as a whole who can't get access to the court process. And what it has done is increased the morbidity and the mortality associated with gender dysphoria by decreasing access to treatment.

JANINE COHEN: The court decided Jamie, who was 11 at the time, could have puberty blockers.

But the judge said she couldn't determine now what would be in Jamie's best interests in six years time when she would need the second stage of treatment - cross changing hormones.

ALISON: We had requested that both stages of treatment be awarded at the same time and that second stage was not granted. We thought that was unfair because it meant that we would have to go back to court twice for the same diagnosis and the same treatment regime.

JANINE COHEN: Jamie's family appealed against this decision.

They also challenged the court's jurisdiction arguing both stages of treatment should be decision of the child, their parents and doctors.

Diana Bryant, the Chief Justice of the Family Law Court of Australia, sat on the appeal case known as Re Jamie.

DIANA BRYANT, AO, CHIEF JUSTICE FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA: Prior to the decision in Re Jamie court authorisation was required for what's commonly known as both stages of the treatment.

JANINE COHEN: The appeal was partially successful. Children would no longer have to go to court for puberty blockers.

But to obtain the second stage of treatment the court would have to establish that the teenager was capable of informed consent known as Gillick competency.

DIANA BRYANT: It relates to the child's capacity in a holistic and psychosocial way to give informed consent to the treatment so that in these kind of cases you'd want to be satisfied that the child concerned was aware of all of the problems, the risks, the dangers, you would want to know that the child was psychologically in a position where they could make these kind of decisions.

JANINE COHEN: Many doctors and families are not happy that young people, who will be about 16 at the time, must still go to court. This time to establish their ability to consent to treatment.

MICHELLE TELFER: I don't think going back to court is a good thing at all. I don't think it is necessary to be honest.

JAMIE: I don't think it's necessary that we have to go back to the court so they can decide if I'm Gillick competent 'cause that's just up to the parents and doctors I think. They would make... they will make just a good a decision as anybody even better 'cause they're experts.

JANINE COHEN: For things to change, there would have to be a test case to the full bench of the Family Court and then to the High Court.

The Chief Justice told Four Corners she's keen to see this happen.

DIANA BRYANT: Well look I'd like to see the High Court have the opportunity to examine these kinds of cases, these gender identity cases and to decide whether or not the court has to be involved at all.

JANINE COHEN: But for now the chief justice is prepared to consult with doctors about the costs and the process.

DIANA BRYANT: I am confident that we can put in place a process which will be easily manageable and will not be expensive for parties to be able to come to court and get a decision about capacity to consent.

JANINE COHEN: Jamie's now in high school and no one knows her history. She's just another girl in class.

DIANA BRYANT: I think society is changing about these issues as well, and I think it is important to remember that I think from what we've seen it's completely innate and when you read all the psychiatric reports and all the reports about how it affects a young person, it... it is undoubtedly innate.

JANINE COHEN: It's been 15 months since Isabelle came out to her parents.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Sometimes people treat me different when they find out I'm transgender.

JANINE COHEN: Do you look forward to one just being yourself and not having to have those conversations and just being a girl?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I do have those days sometimes but not often, I don't often go through a day where I don't have to... really do something that involves it.

JANINE COHEN: Isabelle faces a lifetime of hormone treatment. At 18 she hopes to take another big step.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Well by then I can get a sex change which is an operation where they like flip the penis inside out, it turns into a vagina.

JANINE COHEN: Is that important to have?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I could probably wear a lot more suitable girls clothes, 'cause it gets a bit of a problem cause they, like bathers and things like that 'cause I always have to wear a little skirt thing with bathers.

JANINE COHEN: There's no doubt that Naomi and Andrew love their daughter.

But they haven't forgotten that they once had a son.

(Andrew and Naomi watching a home video)

ANDREW LANGLEY: I remember her as Campbell. It's um...

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Yeah.

ANDREW LANGLEY: It's interesting looking at old photos. I... you see... you know it's Isabelle but I see her as Campbell and I think of he - Campbell's, the little baby we had.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Yeah, and I feel a little bit sad. Like, I don't know... It's weird. I don't miss a son or anything like that... I think I see... I just feel sad for the...

ANDREW LANGLEY: We've still got her but yeah, you do... you grieve, you grieve for the son.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: I don't think I do.

ANDREW LANGLEY: Well, I reckon.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Do you?

ANDREW LANGLEY: Oh I miss Campbell but I know it's Isabelle.

And it's hard doing this because Isabelle doesn't like seeing old footage of herself or old photos or having old photos up so..

NAOMI MCNAMARA: No, yeah.

I think she's more herself now than she's ever been and um... yeah I'm so grateful for that.

(To Isabelle) Right, Isabelle you ready?

JANINE COHEN: A year ago, Isabelle decided she was ready to come out at school.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: She 'd bottled it up herself for so many years that now she'd told us she thought... she was just like right we've got to you know, we've got it moving, we've got to get it happening.

(To Isabelle) Give me a hug. See ya. Have a good day, see you in a bit later okay?

HATTIE LANGLEY: Come on.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: Isabelle was very keen to tell the school and I said, you know, I want you to wait, it's too early yet.

DAVID PELOSI, PRINCIPAL, ALEXANDRA PRIMARY SCHOOL: Isabelle walked into my office one day and sat down and had a chat and it turned out that wanted to have a meeting with me, um, with mum and dad.

NAOMI MCNAMARA: And I got home from work the next day and she said to me I've organised a meeting at school and you're invited (laughs) it's like, well, thanks - that's great.

DAVID PELOSI: When Isabelle arranged that meeting, I hadn't come across anything like this before, I was quite emotional about it, but I felt I had to be strong for Isabelle and the information that she was giving.

JANINE COHEN: Do you mean teary, like you were that affected?

DAVID PELOSI: Yeah I think so, particularly with the way that Isabelle was brave enough to say what she thought.

JANINE COHEN: Slowly Isabelle started changing her appearance at school wearing her hair longer and girl's trousers.

This confused kids and they started to tease her.

(to Isabelle) And you been teased quite a bit hadn't you?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: I counted up to 10 times a day, sometimes even more.

JANINE COHEN: And what sort of things would they say to you?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Well they would say, the most common one was are you a boy or are you a girl and sometimes they'd... sometimes people would say that I'm just, that I'm, how do I explain it, I'm not sure how to say it, 'cause they did use a bit of a bad word and I don't wanna say that one but um...

JANINE COHEN: Tell me what they meant without saying the bad word?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: They said to me I still had a penis whether or not I dress up in girls' clothes, that one offended me a lot.

JANINE COHEN: Isabelle decided to write a letter to all 200 students at her country school.

(Isabelle reading letter)

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Hello everyone I'm a transgender child. This means I have a girl's brain inside a boy's body. This has got harder and harder for me the last five years.

JANINE COHEN: What was in the letter and what was the point of it?

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Um to get people to understand who I am and to allow me to be myself at school and be able to go out in public in the clothes I wanted and to stop, to stop anyone teasing me.

TEACHER: Okay that was just to get your memory going a little bit about the concert. People who...

DAVID PELOSI: For an individual of her age to come forward and divulge that sort of information is I think incredible. To follow that up with a letter that was really an experience that even parents have come forward and one parent actually wrote how every time she read, and she read it several times, she teared up and you know took her hat off and had a conversation with her son about it and being brave and sticking up for Isabelle should anything untoward come about with this. So it really had a powerful effect on not just us from a staff point of view, but as a school and a community.

JANINE COHEN: After the letter, the teasing stopped and Isabelle started to get on with life as a girl.

DAVID PELOSI: Ah, I've certainly seen some changes in Isabelle since she transitioned, when she first arrived at our school, which was three years ago now, she often kept to herself, very much her own person, but now I've seen her branch out into greater friendships.

Since kids have known, they've been more accepting of who she is.

ANDREW LANGLEY: We were just overwhelmed with support, getting stopped by people I had no idea who they were in the supermarket, just... you know, we got Campbell's letter, just to know we've got your support. Our phone was ringing off the hook.

(Paige and Coco singing on stage)

PAIGE PHOENIX ELLIOTT: When times get rough, you can fall back on us...

JANINE COHEN: It can be a tough road for transgender people who are trying to be true to themselves.

COCO: (singing) Don't give up.

JANINE COHEN: But for most it would be much tougher to stay in the shadows and do nothing.

PAIGE PHOENIX ELLIOTT: Sometimes it can be quite a journey to develop the courage to be able to self-support and put yourself out there as you are, especially if you're different to everybody else. Um, but that difference makes you even more beautiful.

MICHELLE TELFER: The courage that someone must have to go through all of that and still want to pursue being who they feel they are, I just think that's something to be admired.

ISABELLE LANGLEY: Well if you don't be yourself, you're going to be miserable for your whole life.

KERRY O'BRIEN: On the one hand this is an enormously uplifting story, but it has a downside.

The assessments required in supporting transgender children involve multi-disciplinary diagnosis and the resources around Australia simply do not match the demand.

Just contemplate for a moment that you're a parent with a deeply-troubled transgender child, you know there's a solution out there but you can't access it - not good.

Background Information

YOUTH HELPLINES

QLife Australia | Australia's first nationally-oriented counselling and referral service for people of diverse sex, genders and sexualities | 1800 184 527 (daily 5:30pm - 10:30pm) |

Kids Helpline | 1800 55 1800

Headspace | 1800 650 890 |

TRANSGENDER SUPPORT SERVICES

VICTORIA

Gender Clinic Royal Children's Hospital | 03 93455890

NEW SOUTH WALES

Dr Elizabeth Riley | Specialist in Gender Identity | Counselling Sessions: West Ryde | Mobile: 0412 880 376 | Counselling@peoplesmart.net.au | Website:

Dr Andrew Kennedy or Dr Kasia Kozłowska | Adolescent Medicine | Westmead Hospital | 02 98456788 |

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Dr Rob Lyons | Psychiatrist | 08 84316244

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Nurse Coordinator | WA Paediatric Gender Diversity Service | Tuesdays and Wednesdays | 0457 569 059

Freedom Centre WA | Phone (08) 9482 0000 or (08) 9228 0354 | email: info@freedom.org.au |

QUEENSLAND

Contact your GP or

Pine Rivers Child and Youth Mental Health | For a specialist referral | Children's Health Queensland | 07 3817-6380

ACT

Dr Tuck Meng Soo | Dr Nick Hamilton | Airport General Practice | 02 62482600

Dr Lisa Watson | Waramanga Medical Centre | 02 62482600

TASMANIA

Dr Jason Westwater | Child & adolescent psychiatrist | Clare House | 03 62338612

NT

Sisters and Brothers | 0487898611

ADVOCACY GROUPS

NATIONAL

Transcend | Transcend is a grassroots support network for parents of transgender children | info@transcendsupport.com.au |

Safe Schools Coalition | Works with schools to ensure that the needs of students who transition gender are met and supports school staff in the development of gender diversity and sexual diversity | 03 9670 5436 | safeschools@fya.org.au |

NEW SOUTH WALES

The Gender Centre NSW | (02) 9569 2366 | reception@gendercentre.org.au |

Carmen Rupe Memorial Trust | | kmg@carmenrupe.org |

National L.G.B.T.I. Health Alliance | (02) 8568 1123 | info@lgbtihealth.org.au |

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Sisters and Brothers NT | 0487 898611

QUEENSLAND

Cairns Kids Safe Haven | (07) 4226 4769 |

Rainbow Program | Relationships Australia | (07) 3423 6869 |

VICTORIA

Ygender | Ygender is a peer led social support and advocacy **group** based in Melbourne |

Transgender Victoria | Dedicated to achieving justice, **equity** and quality health and community service provision for transgender people, their partners, families and friends |

Minus18 | Minus18 is Australia's largest youth-led charity for LGBT youth, supporting more than 100,000 young people each year through social events, resources and online networking |

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ANZPATH | 08 84316244 | anzpath@me.com |

TASMANIA

Working It Out Tasmania | (03) 6334 4013 |

WA

Freedom Centre | (08) 9228 0354 | info@freedom.org.au

|

True Colours | 1300 663 298 | mail@truecolours.org.au | truecolours@unitingcarewest.org.au |

REPORTS AND INFORMATION

| The mental health and well-being of gender diverse and transgender young people in Australia | La Trobe University and University of New England | September, 2014

| A campaign aimed at supporting gender diversity in schools through inclusive uniforms and challenging transphobia | Safe Schools Coalition, Victoria

| Issues Facing Young Australians Who Are Gender Variant and Sexuality Diverse | Cooperative Research Centre | 2013

| Association of Family and Conciliation Courts 51st annual conference | May 2014

| Results From the New Zealand Adolescent Health Survey (Youth'12) | Journal of Adolescent Health | November, 2013

| Australian Human Rights Commission | Regularly Updated

| The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of GLBT Australians | 2012

| A 2011 update incorporating new data | Universities of **Hong Kong** and Michigan | 2011

| The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people | 2010

| A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey the National Center for Transgender Equality | USA

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| ABC News | 17 November, 2014

| In this issue of White Paper, we shift our focus to gender | Radio National | 26 September, 2014

| Gay News Network | 11 November, 2014

| The Drum | 22 October, 2014

| Aired on 17 September 2013 on SBS ONE

| Huffington Post | 16 November, 2014

| Observing the Transgender Day of Remembrance, November 20 | Huffington Post | November, 2014

| Marie Clare | November, 2014

| News.com.au | October, 2014

| Gay Star News | 16 October, 2014

| The Guardian, UK | September, 2014

| TEDTalks | March, 2014

| Lt Col. Cate McGregor AM is the most high profile individual in Australia to 'come out' as a transgendered person | Australian Story | February 2014

| TEDTalks | November, 2013

| All in the Mind | November, 2012

| Life Matters | August, 2012

| The Spirit of Things | October, 2012

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| The scientific world may be on the cusp of discovering the origins of gender | 25 July, 2005

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RE austr : Australia | melb : Melbourne | tasman : Tasmania | victor : Victoria (Australia) | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

IPD transgender

PUB Australian Broadcasting Corporation

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