



# AIS SUPPORT GROUP AUSTRALIA

*Support for intersex people and families.*

P.O. Box 3239, South Brisbane, Queensland Australia. 4101

Telephone/facsimile: 07 3846 3594

Website: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~aissg>

Email: [aissgaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:aissgaustralia@gmail.com)

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Response to the Senate Community Affairs Committee report - “Involuntary or Coerced Sterilisation of Intersex People in Australia”**

“The AIS Support Group Australia welcomes the Senate Committee Report into the involuntary or coerced sterilisation of intersex people in Australia as a timely and well researched document addressing the current and historical treatment of intersex people in Australia”, Ms Bonnie Hart, President of the AIS Support Group Australia said. “We are grateful to senators on the committee and all of the parties who were involved in supplying information to this enquiry so that a balanced and independent overview of the issues affecting intersex people and their families, clinicians and policy makers could be presented.”

“The AIS Support Group Australia is happy that the committee has identified ‘intersex’ as the most acceptable term to describe our state of being within social and political landscapes and that the term ‘differences of sexual development’ be implemented within health environments. The committee has seen fit to state in conclusion “that genetic diversity is not a problem in itself” mirroring our view that there is no inherent ‘disorder’ associated with being intersex.”

“The recommendation towards clear national guidelines to oversee the treatment of intersex people with the medical system is encouraging and welcomed. Such frameworks may have the potential to provide clinicians and parents the confidence in their actions to provide the best possible care of intersex infants and ensure adequate access to grievance processes, if needed, for all parties involved. The AIS Support Group Australia promotes a human rights based, patient centred approach when medical interventions are necessary to preserve life and would support guidelines that mirror this in the highest regard. In establishing these guidelines, and throughout any review process, we would like to see mandatory representation from the intersex community including peer-based support groups.”

**As the AISSGA calls for moratorium on non-urgent medical intervention to intersex bodies,** we welcome the recommendations made by the committee for legal oversight of surgical treatments of intersex people who are unable to fully consent. We are however concerned that with the stated lack of coherent long-term research in this field and the absence of “evidence to show that there are poor clinical or social outcomes from *not* assigning a sex to intersex infants”, that tribunals and courts may continue to permit irreversible medical interventions on intersex infants based on perceived psychosocial rationales. For this reason any court involvement in the decision making process would need to adhere to strict guidelines established with the maintenance of the intersex person’s human rights as its cornerstone.”

“We are grateful for the acknowledgment the committee made of the contributions made peer-based intersex organisations in this report and welcome their recommendations to allocate greater resources and core funding to our groups so that we can continue to provide support and information to our community and health care professionals. As a wholly volunteer run organisation, the AIS Support Group welcomes any support to help us adequately contribute to all of the recommendation processes and manage the vast amount of work still needed to be done to ensure intersex people are happy, healthy and protected under law.”

“The committee has found that “overall, there are very limited studies of the long-term outcomes of surgery, and some of the results should be of serious concern”. For this reason we support their recommendation that federal funding be allocated to conduct additional research in this area.”

“The AIS Support Group looks forward to collaboratively working with the government, medical and human rights experts, the Family court and other intersex groups to ensure the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry are implemented into law and professional practice as quickly as possible.”

**For further information or a photo:**

Ms Bonnie Hart  
Telephone - +61 422 922 406  
Email - [aissgaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:aissgaustralia@gmail.com)