

Fight to be a man

Hobson's Bay Council candidate Tony Briffa found himself in a public stoush against Municipal Association of Victoria President Brad Matheson last week after Mr Matheson referred to Mr Briffa's life as a woman. Mr Briffa talks about being intersex, his involvement in a lot of community groups and his biggest achievement – raising two children. Words and photo: SHERELE MOODY

AT 34 years old, Tony Briffa has endured more than his fair share of put downs and public humiliations.

The Altona Meadows man, who was born with an intersex condition and raised female, was attacked last week by Municipal Association of Victoria President Brad Matheson.

In a statement, Cr Matheson referred to Mr Briffa's political views when he was an ALP member "living under the name of Antoinette".

"The raising of this issue has had a profound effect on my family, who tend to think it would be best if I didn't participate in public life because my opponents use my condition and the way it was treated against me," Mr Briffa said.

"I intend to stand firm and continue to act in the best interests of the community regardless of what they want to say against me."

Mr Briffa was born in Altona and grew up in Hobsons Bay, where he still works.

The proud dad of two foster children, Mr Briffa said he knew from a very early age that there was



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something "wrong" because: "I used to go for medical examinations all the time, usually with many doctors and students watching."

"I only found out the truth about my condition when I was 30, but knew the basics when I was 15," he said.

"I was devastated because it had such a huge impact on my life and that of my family, and because I had so much taken away from me without my consent.

"I wanted to be 'normal' more than anything.

"At the same time however, I was relieved because it confirmed that I was born male with male chromosomes, testes etc.

"It confirmed what I felt about who I am."

Mr Briffa is a thoroughly educated man with a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering complementing his studies in Aerospace Engineering.

When not working, Mr Briffa spreads his time between raising his children and volunteering with the Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome Support Group Australia, the

Genetic Support Network of Victoria, the Western Health Ethics Committee, the Royal Children's Hospital, the Community Advisory Committee, a range of Hobsons Bay Council committees, the Greens, the Attorney General's GLBTI Advisory Committee and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on GLBTI Health.

"I'm involved in these groups for various reasons, but they're all based on wanting to make a positive contribution to society," Mr Briffa said.

"I would like to think my greatest achievement is always yet to come, so that I've always got something to strive for.

"However I am proud of helping families affected by intersex conditions and of my foster children.

"My foster children are very accepting and understanding too.

They have been in my care for eight years and knew me as Antoinette – Changing to Tony didn't make any difference to our relationship."

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<http://www.bnews.net.au/content3/mstar/069/04.pdf>