

Information Pack for Potential Clients

Monash Health Gender Clinic



Thank you for enquiring about our clinic. We hope the information here is of help to you. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the clinic at genderclinic@monashhealth.org. We are open Monday to Friday (and alternating Saturdays) from 9 am to 5 pm.

A note on this document

It is important to remember that the experiences of trans and gender diverse people vary greatly between individuals, as do their goals in seeking gender affirming treatments. Similarly, assessment and management of gender diversity can be complex, and differs between individuals, and body-changing interventions are not preferred by all clients or may not be appropriate. Diagnosis, treatment and side effects of gender affirming treatments differ from one person to the next, therefore, the information in this document is an outline only and should **NOT** be understood as a substitute for specific advice from an appropriate health professional.

Having access to affirming support regardless of what stage you are at in your affirmation journey is important; whether this be from family, friends, or other health care professionals.

We hope this information answers some of your immediate questions. Please feel free to contact us if you require further information and we look forward to meeting with you.

Where is the Gender Clinic?

The clinic is located at the Victorian Pride Centre, [3B, 79/81 Fitzroy St in St Kilda](#). If you're arriving by car, there are several on-street parking choices available in the vicinity of Fitzroy Street. We recommend checking the parking signs for any restrictions, time limits, and associated fees.

For those using public transport, the most convenient options are the number 3/3a, 16, and 96 tram lines. Some individuals may also qualify for transport assistance programs like the Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme. Feel free to reach out to us to determine your eligibility or to request more information about this scheme.

If you have any mobility constraints, please notify clinic staff.

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The Gender Clinic

The Gender Clinic is part of Monash Health, which is the largest public health service in the State of Victoria, Australia. The clinic was established in 1975 and remains the largest government-funded clinic of its kind in Australia.

The Monash Health Gender Clinic aims to assist the trans and gender diverse community of Victoria through:

- Conducting specialist mental health assessments relevant to gender incongruence and gender dysphoria in accordance with international guidelines (World Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care 8);
- Referring, where appropriate, to experienced private or public clinicians who can assist with hormone therapy, surgery, psychotherapy, laser hair removal or voice therapy;
- Providing ongoing mental health support during an individual's medical gender affirmation journey and;
- Conducting multidisciplinary meetings to co-ordinate care for clients.

The clinic accepts referrals for individuals aged 16 and above. Clients can be referred for various reasons. Some people may want to just explore and achieve a better sense of their gender identity, while others who identify with a gender other than their birth-assigned gender may seek assistance in starting the process to make their body as congruent as possible with their affirmed gender.

The clinic's dedicated team performs specialized mental health assessments related to gender incongruence and gender dysphoria. When suitable, they provide support to clients in their journey of affirming their gender. This often involves incorporating other gender-affirming treatments such as hormone therapy, speech therapy, laser hair removal, and surgery.

The clinic is operated by a diverse, multidisciplinary team, which includes consultant psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers, endocrinologists, peer support workers, project workers, research staff, and administrative personnel. Regular meetings are held among all clinical staff to assess and monitor the progress of our clients.

The Gender Clinic is dedicated to education and maintains robust partnerships with numerous educational institutions. Consequently, clients may be invited to support the education of future

clinicians by permitting students to observe or engage in the assessment process. If you have any reservations about this, please communicate your concerns with your clinician.

For clients who live in regional and remote areas (and those who prefer not to travel to the Victorian Pride Centre), the clinic can conduct appointments by telehealth using video call appointments. Please contact us if you would like to receive further information.

The clinic offers assessments through the public system, at no cost. Due to high demand, however, waiting times may be long.

Gender Diversity

To have a gender identity which differs from the gender assigned to you at birth is not a mental illness. “Gender incongruence” is a term that describes a condition in which the gender identity of a person does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. “Gender Dysphoria” is a term that describes the discomfort a person experiences as a result of gender incongruence. We acknowledge that not all gender-diverse people experience the distress known as gender dysphoria.

The Standards of Care

The [World Professional Association for Transgender Health](#) publishes clinical guidelines (the “[Standards of Care](#)” Version 8, 2022). These are endorsed by the Australian Professional Association for Trans Health and are followed by Monash Health Gender Clinic staff. This is to ensure that the highest standard of care is provided to all the clients who attend the clinic.

The primary aim of the Standards of Care is to offer healthcare professionals guidance in supporting transgender and non-binary individuals on their journey towards lasting personal comfort with their gender identity. This guidance aims to enhance their overall health, psychological well-being, and self-fulfilment.

The clinic follows these guidelines when they assess people's mental health, taking into account each person's unique physical, social, and psychological situation. This method shows that being adaptable can lead to better outcomes for the individual while still keeping them safe. Clinic staff aim to collaborate with our clients to figure out the most suitable medical and social choices for each person.

The Clinic's Mental Health Assessment

The main goal of this assessment is to understand each person's unique needs and create a personalized plan that affirms their identity. While quite rare, it's important to make sure we're not missing other conditions that might impact upon a person's experience of their gender identity. That's why our clinic focuses on doing a thorough assessment.

This plan may encompass referrals to suitable services that provide assistance with housing, employment, alleviating social isolation, and more. It's essential to note that autistic people/people on the autism spectrum, as well as individuals with mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, and borderline personality disorder are still welcome to receive support from our clinic. However, their assessments may need additional sessions to ensure that sufficient support systems are established before proceeding with any gender-related treatments.

Accessing the clinic's services

To access Monash Health Gender Clinic services, you will need to get a referral from a medical practitioner, such as a GP or medical specialist. Secure eReferral by HealthLink is now Monash Health's required method of referral; we do not accept referrals by fax, email or post. Find up-to-date information about how to send a referral to Monash Health Specialist Consulting Clinics here: [Secure eReferrals | Monash Health](#).

The clinic accepts referrals from clients that are 16 and older who are residents of Victoria. While you are on the waitlist, we encourage you to focus on improving your physical and mental health and to build your support network with family, friends and peers.

Intake Call

About 6-8 weeks after we receive your referral, our intake team will reach out to you for an initial phone assessment. This is to introduce you to our clinic's services and help the clinic understand your gender affirmation objectives. The intake call should take no more than 30 minutes, during which we'll explore your goals for attending the clinic and to ensure that the gender clinic is the most appropriate service for you. We may suggest alternative services that you can consider.

At this time, we will be able to provide you with referrals and information regarding speech therapy, which is conducted through [La Trobe University's Voice Clinic](#). It is important to recognise that a person's birth-assigned gender is often reflected in their voice and the way they

communicate. Therefore, it is possible that you may request voice modification to reflect your affirmed gender during intake. People who wish to modify their voice or communication style to affirm their gender can ask for a referral to the La Trobe University's Voice Clinic during their intake call or during their assessment.

[Lived Experience/Peer Workers](#)

The clinic provides peer support by peer workers with lived experience. The Gender Clinic Peer Workers can provide mutual support, information and practical assistance to Gender Clinic clients and carers/family as appropriate. They can also provide referral and liaison support to assist clients in accessing other LGBTIQ+ services. Individual and group peer support is available to clients referred to the clinic, including those in the waitlist.

[See a clinician for assessment](#)

Once you reach the top of the waitlist, you will be assigned a clinician, who could be a psychologist, psychiatrist, or a psychiatry/psychology registrar. The clinic will then schedule appointments for your visits to the clinic.

The first step of the assessment process includes a series of interviews. Depending on your consent, this might also include a thorough psychological evaluation and, if needed, a family assessment. Some parts of the assessment may require working together with other team members, like a neuropsychologist and a social worker.

Throughout the assessment, your clinician will gather information about your experiences related to your gender identity across different life stages and any distress associated with them. This assessment serves a dual purpose: firstly, to identify your strengths, and secondly, to determine the support you may require as you embark on your gender affirmation, along with strategies to alleviate any distress. As part of this process, your clinician will provide information about the medical affirmation process and assess your understanding of its associated risks and benefits.

It's common to feel some anxiety before your first appointment. However, please rest assured that this is a safe and confidential space where you can explore deeply personal issues. Your clinicians have no expectations regarding your appearance or behaviour. We encourage you to attend your appointments in a manner that makes you feel comfortable. By being honest and open, you enable your clinician to form a comprehensive understanding of your experiences and needs.

After the assessment

Although it is very rare, if there are safety or other concerns that suggest it may not be advisable to proceed with the medical transition at this stage, we will engage in discussions about providing support and exploring alternative strategies to manage distress.

In cases where no significant obstacles are identified and you are able to give informed consent to the medical affirmation process, you may be referred to other gender-affirming services, which could include:

- hormonal treatments to masculinise the body or feminise the body; and/or
- if appropriate and when additional criteria are met, gender affirming surgeries.

Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy

Hormone treatment plays a significant role in the physical and psychological transition process for many clinic clients. These hormones are prescribed by medical specialists, specifically endocrinologists or experienced General Practitioners. These healthcare professionals ensure the individual's medical stability and evaluate for any physical contraindications before initiating hormonal therapy.

It's important to note that mental health clinicians at the clinic do not prescribe hormones. For gender-affirming hormone treatment services, your clinician can provide a referral to the Gender Endocrinology Service at Monash Health, a private endocrinologist, or your preferred General Practitioner. We strongly discourage obtaining hormones without a prescription.

It's crucial to be aware that all individuals receiving hormonal treatment may experience medical, psychological, and social side effects. Prior to commencing hormone therapy, it's essential to familiarize yourself with these potential effects. Before referral to the hormone prescriber, you must meet the criteria outlined in the WPATH Standards of Care.

Gender Affirming Surgeries

For some people, surgery is a very important step in their transition. These surgeries involve procedures that usually can't be undone and are done to make their bodies match their gender identity.

Gender affirming surgeries can include breast augmentation, chest masculinisation surgery/top surgery, facial feminisation, voice feminisation, tracheal shave, as well as genital surgeries such as hysterectomies (removal of the uterus), orchiectomies (removal of the testes), or vaginoplasties,

labiaplasties, phalloplasties, among others. Which surgeries are right for you, depend on your own affirmation goals and gender identity.

Monash Health currently offers a limited range of gender-affirming surgeries, including hysterectomy, oophorectomy (removal of ovaries), tubal ligation, orchiectomy, and vocal feminisation.

The Gender Clinic can provide some financial help to a few clients each year to assist with the surgery costs of chest masculinisation surgeries and vaginoplasties/labiaplasties. You can talk to your clinician to learn more. Private health insurance might be required to be able to receive financial assistance.

[Public fertility care services](#) are available to all Victorians through the Royal Women's Hospital and Monash Health.

Speech Therapy and Laser Removal

Lastly, as mentioned during the intake call after your referral, you have the option to be referred for gender-affirming speech therapy, provided by [La Trobe University's Voice Clinic](#). Additionally, you can access laser hair removal services at Monash Health for free or at a reduced cost through [Victoria University's Gender Clinic - Affirmative Skin Health Services](#) for clients referred by the MHGC.

Accessing other gender affirming services privately

We understand that having the ability to choose a service provider is crucial for some clients.

Minimising the barriers to accessing trans affirming care is important and therefore we would like to inform you of potential pathways you might want to explore. A comprehensive mental health assessment is recommended prior to commencing gender affirming treatment.

We recommend visiting the [Australian Professional Association for Transgender Health](#) for a list of gender affirming providers who can assist you. Additionally, you can also consider reaching out to Peer Navigators at [Your Community Health](#) (Preston & Ballarat) to help you find the most suitable provider for your needs.

Informed Consent

Certain General Practitioners (GPs) follow an Informed Consent approach to care, in which the GP conducts their own mental health assessment. You can discover more about Informed Consent models of care and find providers at <https://auspath.org.au/>.

Private clinicians

In the private sector, there are psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who specialize in conducting gender-related mental health assessments. If you're considering a private psychologist or psychiatrist, we recommend choosing one with expertise in gender incongruence for your assessment.

Private clinicians typically have much shorter waiting lists than the Gender Clinic. However, it's important to be aware that there are associated costs for seeing a private clinician, even after claiming a Medicare rebate. For the most current information on waiting times and consultation fees, please get in touch with the clinicians directly to plan for an appointment.

Please note that clients who have undergone a mental health assessment by a private clinician and are subsequently referred to the Monash Health Gender Clinic for other gender-affirming services like hormone therapy or surgery will still need to adhere to the standard waiting period to see a mental health clinician.

Surgeons

We can offer assessments for individuals seeking gender affirmation surgeries through private plastic surgeons. To learn about the fees and costs associated with these procedures, please reach out to your chosen surgeon's office directly.

Speech Therapy

To find a private speech therapist, visit <http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/> where you can search for private providers. Alternatively, you can get in touch with the La Trobe University Voice Clinic directly and request a list of private providers who specialize in voice feminization or masculinization.