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Victorian families already distressed by Liberals' puberty blockers review pledge

Transcend Australia, a national community-controlled not-for-profit supporting families of trans, gender diverse and non-binary children and young people, is calling on the Victorian Opposition Leader, Jess Wilson to clarify what the Liberal Party's proposed review of gender-affirming healthcare would mean for Victorian families.

The announcement is already causing concern among families with children who are currently receiving care, waiting for specialist appointments or working with clinicians to understand what healthcare options may be appropriate for their child.

"Families are asking a very simple question: will their child continue to be able to access the healthcare recommended by their treating team?" said Susanne Prosser, CEO of Transcend Australia.

"Victorian families deserve certainty. Jess Wilson should tell families whether she intends to protect their children's access to evidence-based healthcare."

One Victorian parent, Isabel, said the announcement had immediate impacts beyond the young person at the centre of care. The parent described the impact on their whole family:

"My daughter's siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunties, cousins, all of whom love my kid for who she is, will also suffer at the thought of what might happen if my daughter is not allowed to access the healthcare she needs to keep her safe, healthy and thriving."

Ms Wilson says she would follow Queensland's approach. Victoria should learn from what happened in its own backyard. Queensland's independent review, led by Professor Ruth Vine, and funded by taxpayers, found that: "Puberty suppression may provide benefits for some children and adolescents, provided there is appropriate assessment, informed consent, monitoring and clinical oversight."

Despite this, the Queensland Government extended restrictions on starting puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormones in the public system until 2031. Families in Queensland have subsequently reported significant financial and practical barriers to accessing care, with some turning to the private system at substantial personal cost.

The Liberals' announcement came just one day after the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia's peak independent authority on health and medical research, released advice following an extensive expert review of the available evidence.

The NHMRC advice, endorsed by Chief Medical Officers around Australia, recommends that puberty blockers remain available as an option for some young people who have commenced puberty and are assessed as suitable. The advice also emphasises shared decision-making involving young people, parents and healthcare professionals.

Transcend welcomes the NHMRC advice.

"Parents want to know that decisions about their child's care are being guided by rigorous evidence, expert clinical judgement and a commitment to helping young people thrive," Ms Prosser said.

"That is precisely why independent institutions such as the NHMRC exist."

Ms Wilson calls her proposal a “second opinion”. Australia’s peak expert body has already assessed the evidence, acknowledged its limits and set out clinical safeguards. Any stakeholder with additional evidence can provide it through the NHMRC consultation process now underway.

Commissioning another state review would duplicate work that has already been completed, consume valuable public resources and risk creating further uncertainty for families and healthcare providers.

"If the Liberals are serious about improving outcomes for young people, they should invest in earlier mental health support, reduce waiting times for specialist care and ensure families can access help before they reach crisis point," Ms Prosser said.

"That is where Victoria's attention and resources should be focused."

-ENDS-

About Transcend Australia

Transcend Australia is a national community-controlled not-for-profit supporting families of trans, gender diverse and non-binary children and young people. We provide family support, peer connection and resources, and advocate for young people and their families.

Media enquiries

Sara Norbury, Communications Director 0493 646 981 and sara@transcend.org.au