

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHARITY REPORTS MAIL & SUN TO LEVESON INQUIRY AMID FEARS FOR CHILD SAFETY

A charity calling for accuracy, dignity and respect for transgender and intersex people in the British media has made a second submission to the Leveson Inquiry into press standards and regulation.

Trans Media Watch (TMW) addressed the Leveson Inquiry on February 8th. Since then, a surge of stories featuring trans people have appeared in the national press. Most of these have focused on two particular cases:

- A transgender man who became pregnant and gave birth to a child
- A five year old who has was born male, but who is now accepted by her family as female

Helen Belcher, Treasurer of TMW, says that recent coverage raises issues of child protection:

“With both stories, there are significant concerns over misrepresentation and, with both, there are serious concerns over the press affecting the safety of children.”

Referring to a Daily Mail article, in which Paul Bracchi claims gender dysphoria did not exist 20 years ago, Ms Belcher commented:

“We are particularly concerned about the inaccuracies and discrimination that appear in the Mail’s article of 25 February, and have taken these concerns to the Press Complaints Commission.”

Paris Lees, TMW’s Project Manager, adds:

“How dare Paul Bracchi claim that gender dysphoria didn’t exist 20 years ago? It did. I was a child then, but I can tell you it was very real. Sadly, like most of the journalists whipping up hysteria over trans children, he hasn’t got the faintest idea what he is talking about.”

Ms Lees said there was usually little news content in stories featuring trans and intersex people:

“In the search for a salacious story, parts of the press disregard the safety of innocent children. Why? Well, for the most part, these articles are just an excuse to point and stare.”

She concluded:

“This isn’t about transgender people, it’s about bad journalism. The tabloids are driving an atmosphere of fear by parading a vulnerable minority group as freaks and deliberately misrepresenting the realities of our lives.”

TMW has identified that, between early November and early February, the average number of articles about trans issues in the national press was less than one per day. In the fortnight following TMW’s appearance at Leveson, 34 such articles were published. 14 of those were published by the Daily Mail and its offshoots.

Both Belcher and Lees expressed concern about messages appearing under some of the articles, a number of which advocate violence against the children featured. Such comments, they argue, reveal the level of aggression that can be inspired by hostile coverage, and the risk to children this creates.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Trans Media Watch is a charity which works with the media to ensure transgender and intersex people are treated with accuracy, dignity and respect. Formed in 2009, it has collaborated with regulators, broadcasters and government, as well as with trans and intersex people, and their families, who are approached by the media.

TMW does not advocate censorship, but encourages journalists and editors to take responsibility for their work, particularly with stories concerning children. Its style guide, which provides advice on the coverage of trans and intersex-interest stories, and is backed by the PCC, has been widely circulated. TMW also boasts strong support on social networking sites, and has links with parallel organisations across the globe.

TMW addressed the Leveson Inquiry on 8th February.

<http://www.transmediwatch.org/>

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