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Trans Media Watch responds to Chelsea Manning coming out

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Trans Media Watch advises on coverage of Chelsea Manning coming out

Charity responds to announcement that soldier is transgender.

The charity Trans Media Watch (TMW) today welcomed the decision by Chelsea Manning to come out publicly as transgender (trans), but expressed concern about some of the coverage of this story in the media.

TMW chair Jennie Kermode noted that the charity had known Manning was trans for some time but had made no public statement on the matter as the former soldier did not wish it to be a matter for public discussion. “We are glad that Chelsea now feels able to speak up about something that means so much to her,” she said. “We have not been surprised to see some ugly prejudice expressed in response but we feel it is a positive thing that her true identity can now be acknowledged. Far too many people spend their lives suffering in silence. We hope that most people will respect Chelsea’s bravery and accept her for who she is.”

Trans Media Watch recommends that media outlets covering the story use female pronouns to refer to Manning. It is pleased to see that a number of outlets, including the Daily Mail and the Independent, have done this, but is disappointed that others have not. It has received a large number of statements of concern about poor coverage of the story by the BBC.

“It is now widely understood that most trans people have consistent gender identities from early in their lives,” Kermode said. “Chelsea has said clearly that she has felt female since childhood. She is no less entitled to respect for that identity because it doesn’t match her appearance. She is no less entitled to respect for her chosen name than George Osborne or Jodie Foster. In the 21st Century, we expect the media to know better than to dismiss somebody’s identity just because they are trans.”

Background Information

Trans Media Watch is a charity which works with media outlets to ensure transgender and intersex people are reported with accuracy, dignity and respect. Formed in 2009, it has worked with newspapers, regulators, broadcasters and government, as well as with transgender and intersex people approached by the media. It has a well supported presence on Facebook and Twitter, and has links with parallel organisations across the globe.