

# Gender Dysphoria in Children and Adolescents:

## An update on clinical practice, research and advocacy



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# Background

The past 10 years has seen rapid social change with increasing community acceptance and visibility of trans and gender diverse identities in Australia and across the western world. This is driving change in clinical, legal and political contexts.



Andreja Pejic



John Jolie Pitt



Caitlyn Jenner



# Georgie Stone

Victoria's Young Australian of the year 2018

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**Murdoch Childrens Research Institute**





Colin Percy  
ts, passed away  
vember 2014.  
ears.  
Percy and Lily  
loved brother of  
e (all dec'd) and  
h loved uncle of  
Kathryn, Julia,  
milies.  
are invited to  
of Colin's life to  
Chapel, Mount  
rium, Nursery  
on Thursday,  
commencing

**VERALS**  
351 7800  
INCE 1840  
.com.au

**births**



**A RETRACTION - BOGERT -**  
In 1995 we announced the arrival  
of our sprogget, Ellizabeth Anne, as  
a daughter. He informs us that we  
were mistaken. Oops! Our bad.  
We would now like to present, our  
wonderful son - Kal Bogert.  
Loving you is the easiest thing in  
the world. Tidy your room.

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# **"Being Me"**

**4 Corners, ABC November 2014**

***"You don't set out to measure these things but I can't think of a more powerfully poignant story that I've introduced than this one. Nor can I think of one more capable of suspending prejudice and creating understanding. It's about transgender children, the potential nightmare they have to confront, the lives that hang in the balance and a special brand of courage that is ultimately inspirational."***

*Kerry O'Brien, November 17, 2014*

# Terminology

**Sex assigned at birth:** Determined by chromosomes, gonads, hormones, and physical appearance. Sex is essentially constant.

**Gender identity:** a person's internal sense of being male, female, or, for some people, a blend of both or neither.

**Gender expression:** the many ways people show their gender to others, such as the clothing and haircuts they wear or the roles and activities they choose.

# Terminology

## Gender Dysphoria

The medical term that describes the distress a transgender or gender diverse person experiences in relation to this incongruence.

Being transgender is now largely viewed as part of the natural spectrum of human gender diversity, but gender dysphoria is associated with severe psychiatric co-morbidity and social, educational, vocational and economic disadvantage.



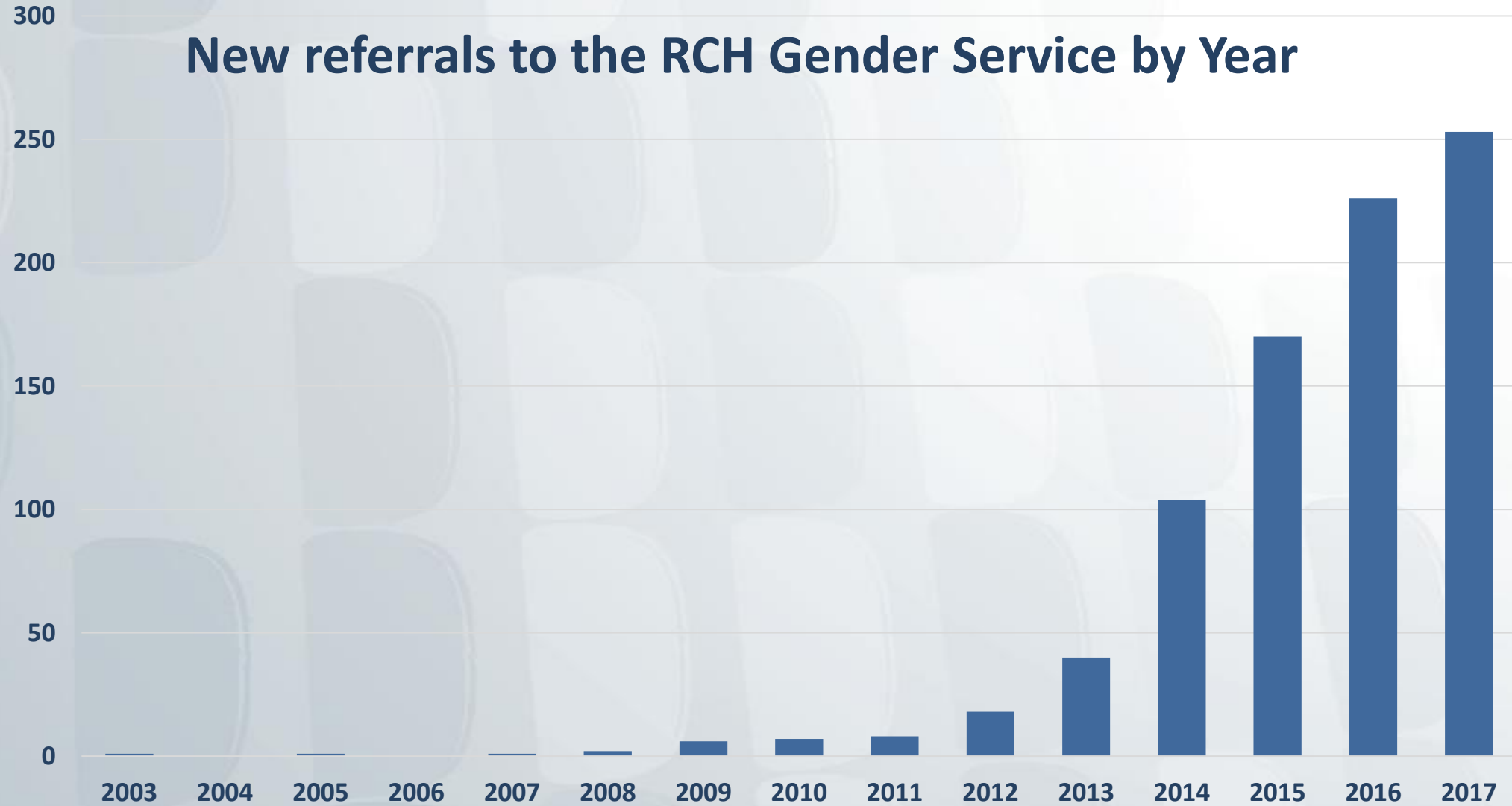
# Incidence



- New Zealand Adolescent Health Survey (Youth 2012)  
A national, cross sectional, population based survey  
8,166 secondary school students  
**1.2% reported being transgender**  
**2.5% reported not being sure about their gender**  
**1.7% did not understand the question**  
T.C Clark et al Journal of Adolescent Health  
(2014) 55: 93-99
- RCH clinic numbers are increasing: 250 fold increase in new referrals from 2003 to 2017.
- Western European and US specialist paediatric GD services report similar increases over the past 10 years.



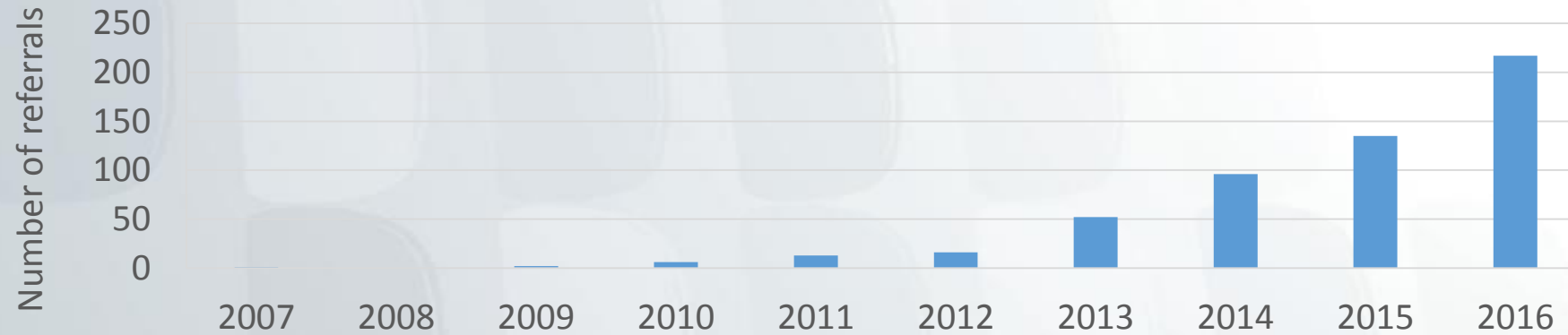
## New referrals to the RCH Gender Service by Year



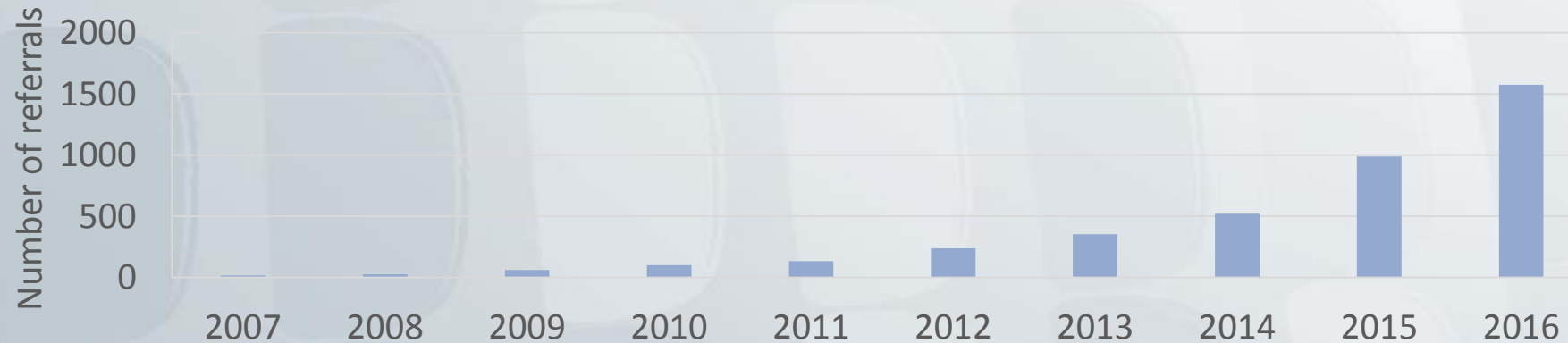
# Clinical impact of social change



## RCH Gender Service



## Tavistock Clinic (UK)





# Transgender adolescents suffer high rates of exclusion, abuse and mental health problems



**Social exclusion**  
**43%**

**Verbal abuse**  
**66%**

**Physical abuse**  
**31%**

**Self harm**  
**80%**

**Attempt suicide**  
**48%**

Hillier L, Jones T et. al. "Writing Themselves in 3" (2010)  
Straus, P et al. Trans Pathways (2017)

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# RCH Gender Service



## Clinical Care

Largest multidisciplinary  
Gender Service in Australia  
and one of the largest in  
the world

## Research

### Trans20

A longitudinal study to  
improve outcomes for  
trans youth

## Education and Advocacy

Legal reform  
Teaching students and  
clinicians





# Australian Standards of Care and treatment guidelines

For trans and gender diverse  
children and adolescents



**First published online in September 2017**

Assoc. Prof. Michelle Telfer, Dr Michelle Tollit  
Dr Carmen Pace, Dr Ken Pang.

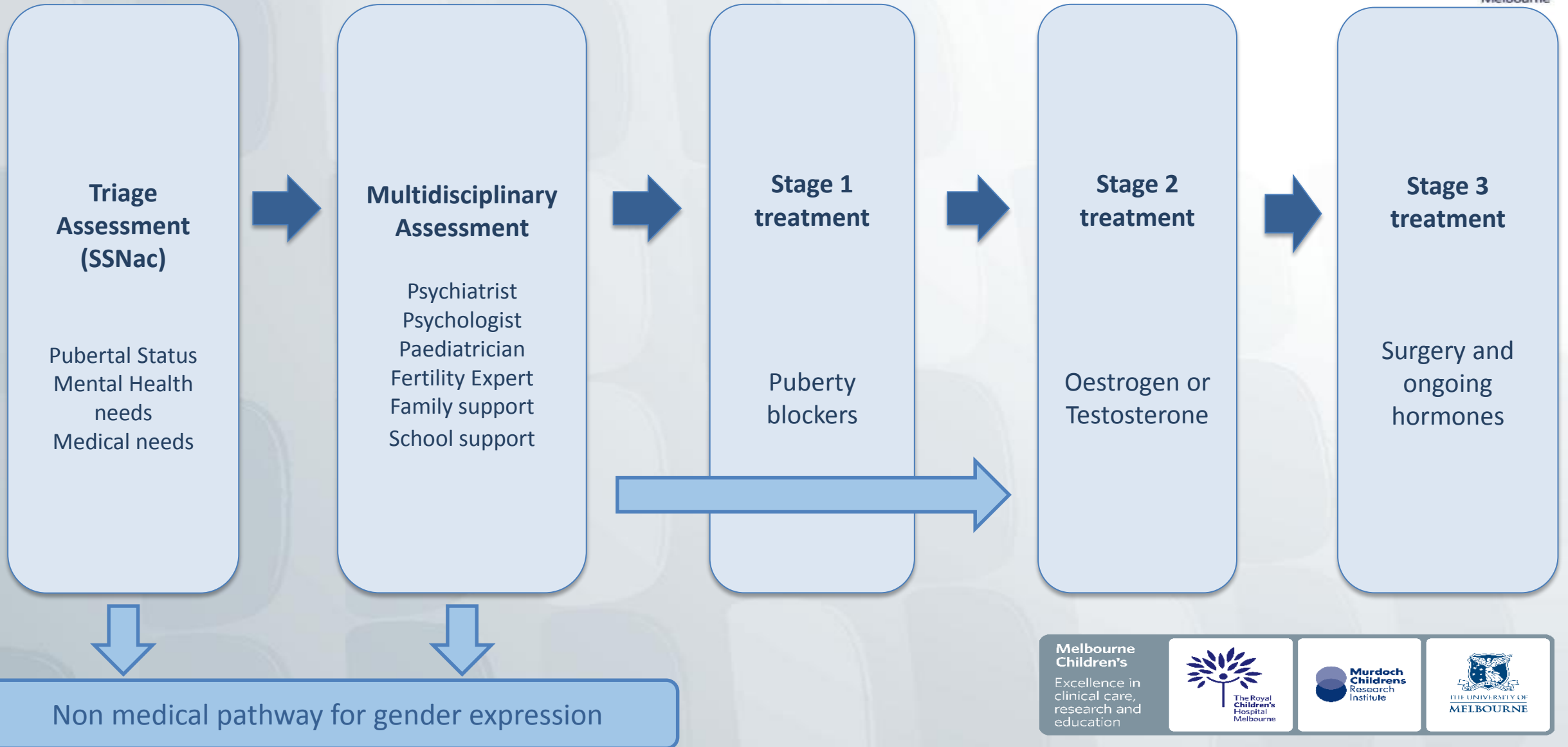
- **Endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Professional Association for Transgender Health**
- **Published in MJA on 18 June 2018**
- **Subject of an editorial in The Lancet on 30 June 2018**

Download from the RCH Gender Service webpage

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# Stages of Clinical Intervention





# All children and adolescents receive fertility counselling prior to commencement of any medical intervention

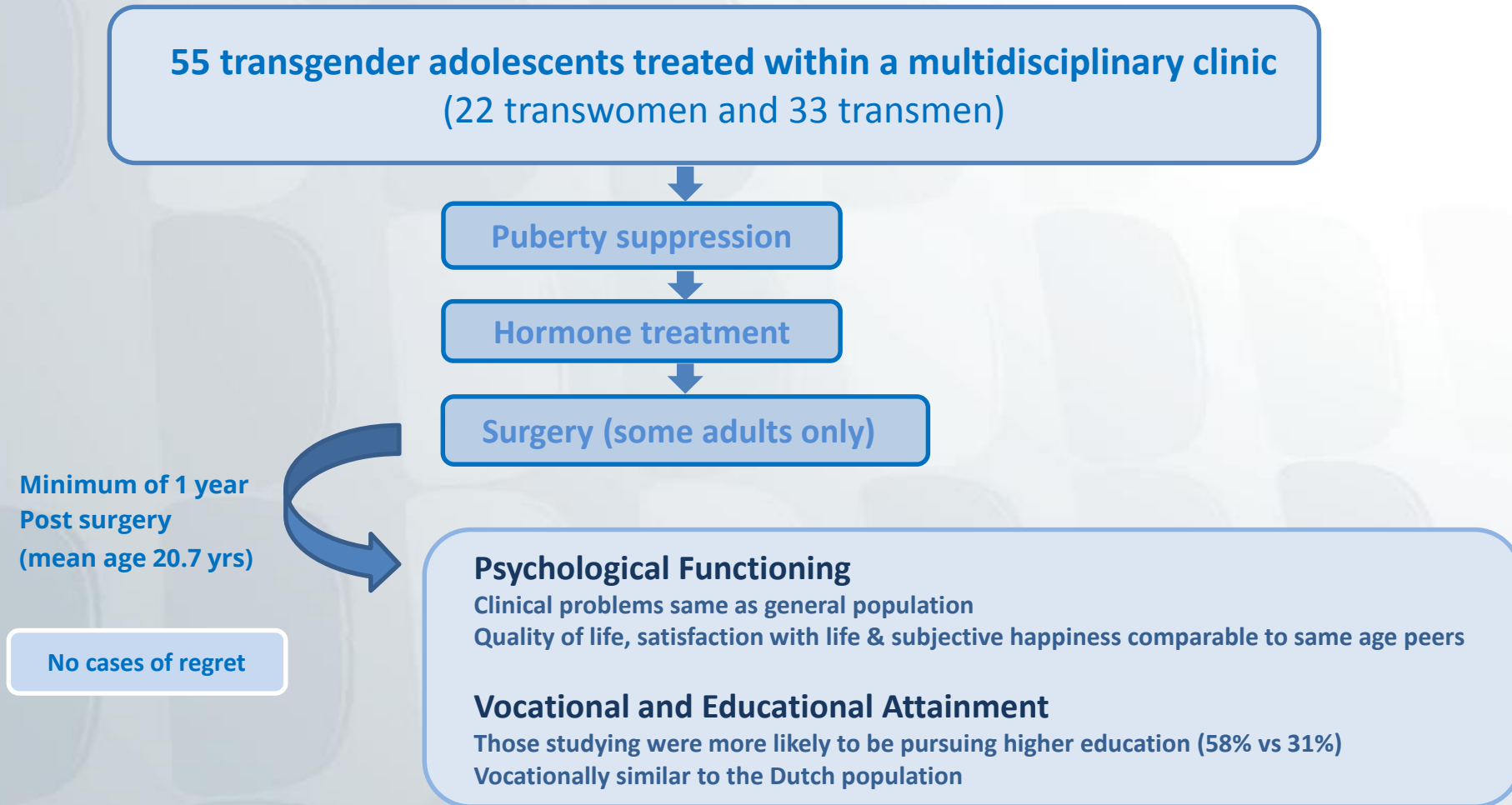
## Young people assigned female at birth but identifying as male

- Testosterone reduces fertility but pregnancy remains possible in the future if testosterone is temporarily ceased.
- Storage of eggs or ovarian tissue can be offered as an option but is not necessarily recommended due to the possibility of future pregnancy without intervention, the invasiveness of the retrieval procedure and the requirement for oestrogen stimulation in egg retrieval.

## Young people assigned male at birth but identifying as female

- Infertility occurs following use of oestrogen
- Storage of sperm if patient is post pubertal is recommended
- Storage of testicular tissue via biopsy is recommended and offered if patient is pre-pubertal or in early puberty

# Psychological outcome after puberty suppression and gender reassignment



De Vries et al Paediatrics 2014

# RCH Research in Gender

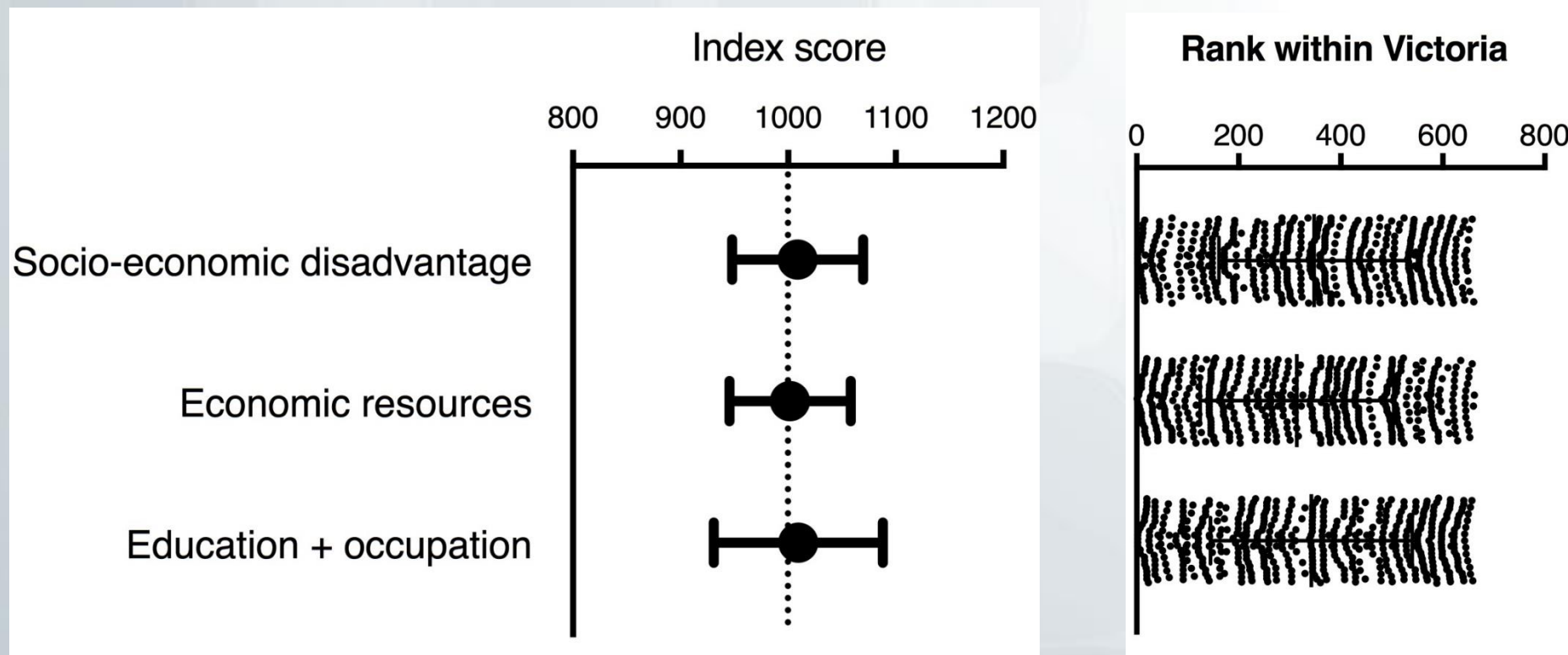
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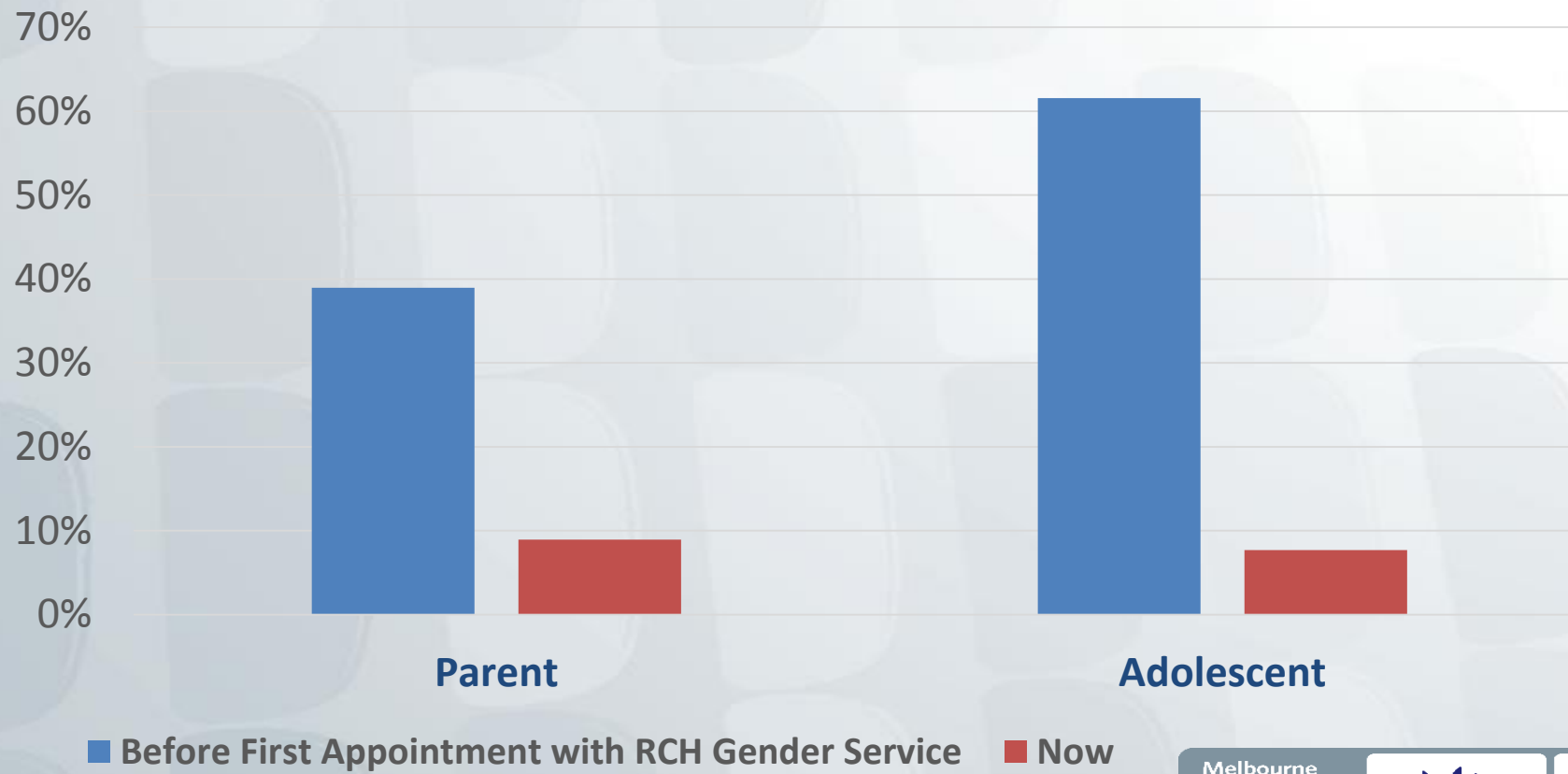


# RCHGS patients come from a broad range of backgrounds



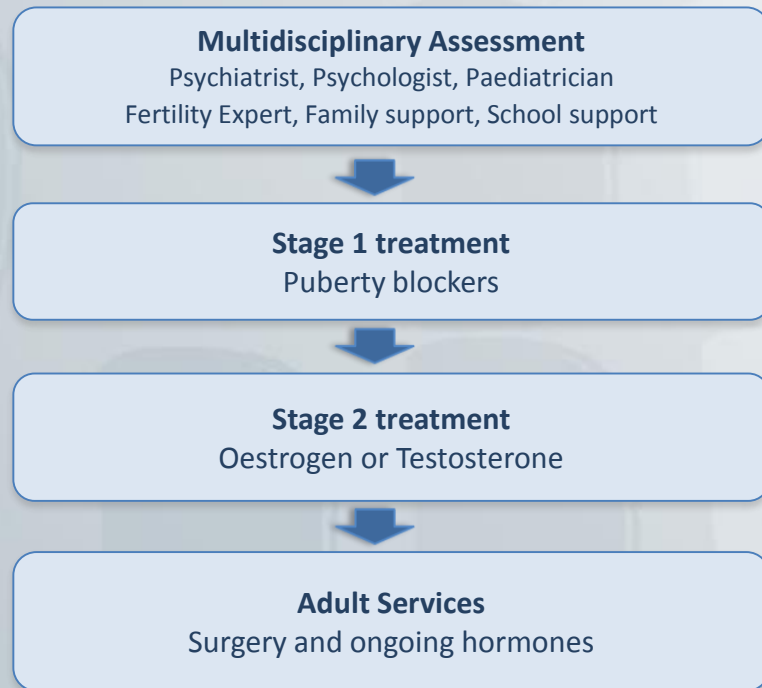
## Outcome: reduction in distress

Parents and Adolescents Experiencing **Severe Distress** Due to the Child or Adolescent's Gender Concerns



# RCH Gender Service Evaluation

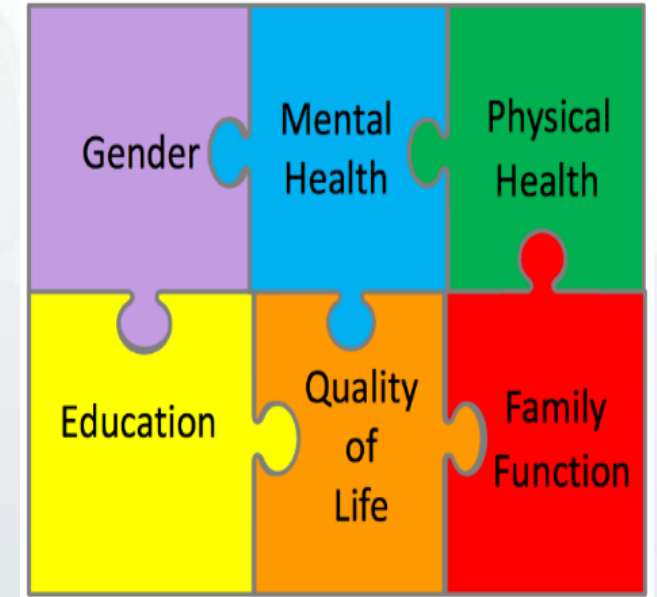
## Clinical pathway



## Evaluation pathway



## Outcomes

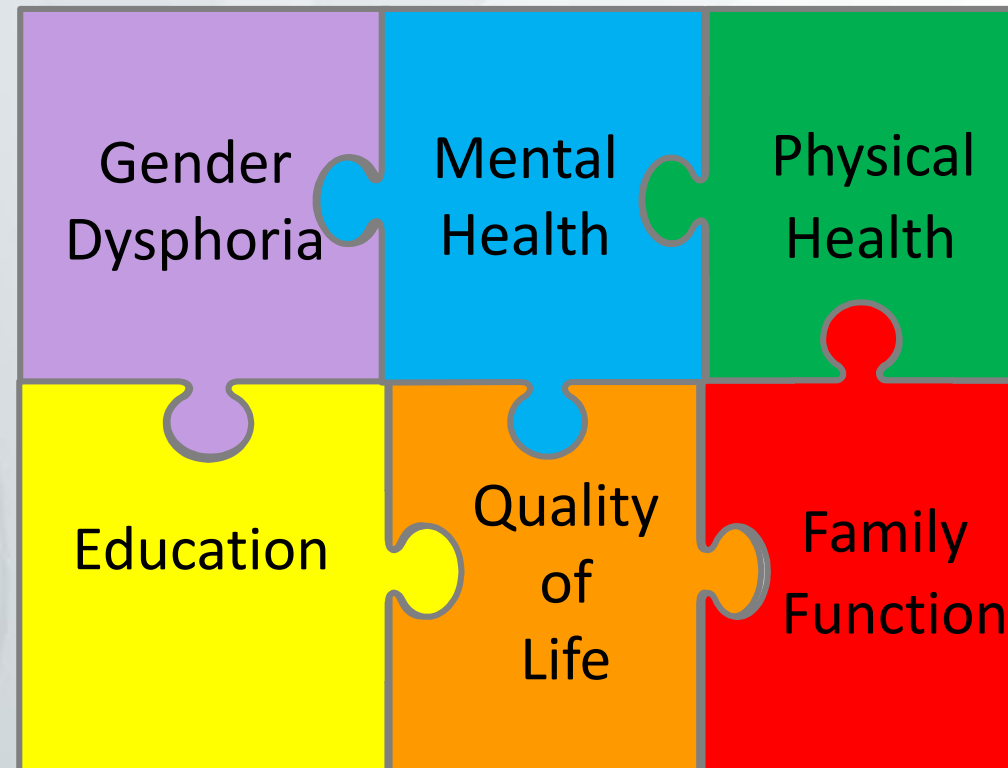


# Trans20 outcome measures

- Child Behaviour Checklist
- Youth Self Report
- Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire
- Spence Children's Anxiety Scale
- Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale

- Gender Identity Questionnaire
- Gender Preoccupation and Stability Questionnaire
- Gender Slider
- The Body Image Scale
- Social Transition Questionnaire

- Academic achievement
- Psychological Sense of School Membership survey
- School absenteeism
- Gatehouse Bullying Scale



- growth (height, weight, BMI)
- blood pressure
- bone mineral density
- liver function
- haemoglobin
- cholesterol
- blood sugar levels

- McMaster Family Assessment Device

- Child Health Utility - 9D
- AQoL-4D and WHOQoL(Bref)



# Advocacy for trans adolescents

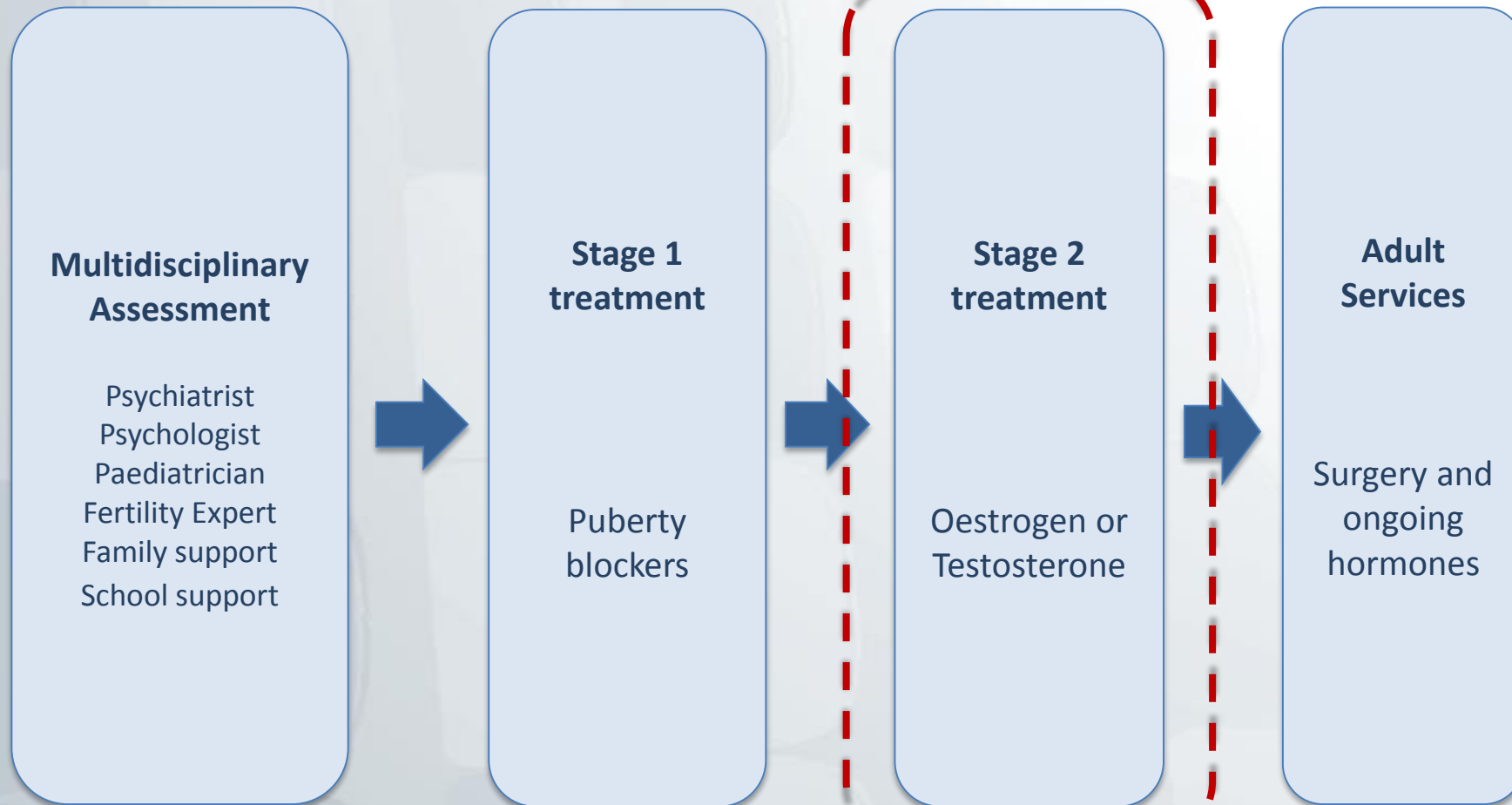
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# Legal impacts: Involvement of the Family Court in medical treatment

Family Court approval required which is unique to Australia



# The Family Court of Australia and trans adolescents

- As a “special medical procedure”, the Family Court of Australia has to either
  - a. **determine a young person’s competence to make decisions for hormone treatment**  
or, if the young person is not competent
  - b. **decide whether hormone treatment is in the best interest of the adolescent**

This is required even if the young person, their parents/guardians and the medical team involved are in agreement that the young person is competent or that hormone treatment is in their best interests.



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# What were the consequences of court involvement?

- **Time delays** to getting treatment occur (up to 6-8 months usually)
- **Psychological distress** for young people and parents
- **Expensive** for families
- **Increase in mental health morbidity and mortality**
- Adolescents **accessing hormones illegally** online
- **Waste of medical resources**
- **Waste of court resources** (Judges, barristers, solicitors time)







**We've had some success in 2017!**







**KELVIN**

September 2017

FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA



## The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne

29 November 2017 · 🌐

Just after 12.20pm today, the landmark decision was made that transgender adolescents set to receive stage two treatment will no longer have to go before the Family Court. Here's the reaction today at the RCH as the decision was announced. The full story is on our website.

<https://blogs.rch.org.au/.../kelvin-family-court-announcement/>



63K Views



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