

# Australian Services Union Local Government & Energy Delegates Conference 2020

*“COVID AND BEYOND - Well Paid, Secure & Safe Jobs”*

## Handling Objections - Gender Affirmation

### Objection - Why do they get their own special treatment?

**Response** - As a union we want to support workers to stay in work no matter what they're going through. That's why we fight for parental leave, family violence leave and flexibility arrangements. We all have different experiences and challenges, it shouldn't mean we have to leave a good job.

### Objection – There's no transgender people at this workplace.

**Response** – Well we don't know that for sure, there may be transgender workers who haven't come out yet, or people you work with who have transitioned but have never told anyone. Even if there are no trans people who work here right now, this clause will show potential future employees that this is a safe and supportive workplace, and it might even help a current employee come out.

### Objection – I don't think this should be a union issue/priority.

**Response** – Unions fight for lots of different things to make sure that all workers are treated fairly. Other people might not think that secure work or pay rises are important, but lots of our members do, that's why we usually have a few things on our log of claims.

### Objection - Our workplace is already great for trans people.

**Response** - Look that's really great if you think this workplace is safe for trans workers, that means that employees are already trying to make sure all their colleagues feel welcome. Workplaces can change though, that's why we fight for provisions in the Enterprise Agreement, which is a legally binding document and can't be changed without a vote of all employees.

### Objection – Why can't they just use sick leave? Cancer patients don't get special leave.

**Response** – If people need to access multiple transition services, they can burn through sick leave really quickly. Hormone specialists aren't available after work hours, and surgeries can mean a couple of weeks of recovery time. We often support members who get long term illnesses to be supported at work with access to extra leave and flexible working arrangements too, it's all about supporting workers no matter the challenge.

**Objection - That just sounds like a lifestyle choice, why should you get special treatment for that?**

**Response** - Being transgender isn't a choice, and living as the gender you don't identify as can be extremely painful. We recognize that our members are going to have differing views on things, but at the end of the day, we're going to fight for things that will ensure all our members are treated fairly.

**Objection – I don't want to have to share the bathroom with a transgender person.**

**Response** – I understand that this can be an uncomfortable topic, because at the end of the day we all want to be safe at work. The thing is, transgender people are the most at risk of being harassed or bullied just for going to the toilet, you must recognize that it would be pretty scary if every time you went to the toilet there was a chance someone was going to tell you that you shouldn't be there.

**Objection – I don't want to do training, I already know it all.**

**Response** – Hey there is always room to learn some things, and even if you know it all, other employees might not. At the end of the day, our employer has a positive duty to ensure this workplace is free from discrimination, that means we all have to occasionally sit down at training and learn about these issues.

