



2 January 2012

**Response to The Straits Times (“Transsexual jailed 15 months for oral sex with boy”, 2 January 2013)**

The Straits Times has always set the tone of discussion on various issues that matter to Singaporeans.

We are therefore disappointed that your publication has handled the issue in a manner that is highly derogatory to transgender individuals. Sharing that Tan has undergone breast implant surgery and mentioning that she “cross-dresses” and “wears make-up” is just prurient – these facts have got nothing to do with the criminal act here. What the article shows instead is a serious lack of awareness and sensitivity to issues of gender identity and expression. We suggest you look to the Associated Press Stylebook, which clearly recommends that the pronoun to use should be consistent with the way the subject lives publicly. We also recommend that you take a look at the media reference guide published by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (<http://www.glaad.org/files/MediaReferenceGuide2010.pdf?id=99>).

We are concerned that humiliating transgender individuals in this manner would mislead the public into thinking that it is okay to refer to transgender individuals by their assigned (i.e., birth) sex, and that it is okay to investigate into the extent of bodily reconstruction they have undergone. They, like everyone else, have their right to privacy, and the public's right to information does not extend to making an unnecessary mockery of an entire group of citizens.

We sincerely hope that your publication would take steps to ensure that this does not happen again.

The Purple Alliance supports the welfare of LGBTQ individuals by empowering real people to share their stories and talents, providing services to support them in leading dignified lives, and helping them communicate. By ensuring that these stories and conversations are shared, we will increase understanding, promote acceptance, and advance equality. We support research concerning LGBTQ issues in Singapore, provide high-quality resources, and are open to working with external groups and interested individuals on projects that support the dignity of LGBTQ individuals and that nurture positive relations with the public.

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