

Catherine Salmond
Editor, The Herald
24th August 2025

Dear Ms Salmond,

Today's interview with Rebecca Don Kennedy, CEO of the Equality Network (<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25413097.equality-chief-i-not-fight-trans-rights-hurt-women/>), contains a litany of smears aimed at ordinary women who understand the reality of biological sex. Indeed, the interview contains so many inaccuracies that we cannot address them in the space of one letter. As a campaigning lesbian organisation, and one of the intervening parties who supported For Women Scotland in their recent Supreme Court case, we would like to focus on those points which are particularly pertinent to lesbians.

The interview opens with Dr Kennedy invoking the imaginary threat of the removal of equal marriage rights. Equal marriage has been legal in Scotland since 2014, is settled as such, and we are aware of no campaigns or public appetite to abolish it. Dr Kennedy goes on, repeatedly, to conflate gender critical opinions with homophobia, silencing as she does the many lesbians and gay men who feel unrepresented by LGBTQ+ organisations such as the Equality Network, and who campaign for our rights as same-sex attracted people.

In a section of the interview which, in coming from a fellow lesbian, is nothing short of astonishing, Dr Kennedy criticises the defining of women by 'genitalia', which she says has taken women's rights back by 50 years. Lesbians are, of course, women who are exclusively same sex attracted; we are oriented to other women, including their bodies. If we do not recognise the sexed differences between male and female bodies, it is impossible to protect the rights of lesbians, or women more generally.

Dr Kennedy claims that opposition to gender ideology and self-ID originates in right-wing politics and specifically from the US; she 'knows' it is coming from 'concerted MAGA rhetoric'. This is a deeply offensive and insulting smear which denies the agency of Scottish lesbians and feminist campaigners and aims to silence and erase our concerns and our work. In doing this Dr Kennedy demonstrates the paucity of her own arguments, while complaining of being silenced herself.

In invoking the offensive trope of lesbians not being recognised as women, and being forcibly removed from women's toilets, Dr Kennedy attempts to use lesbian women as a wedge to force the admission of men into women's spaces. We are tired of debunking this: pressure on lesbians who do not conform to feminine stereotypes is made worse, rather than better, by policies allowing men into facilities intended for women.

Dr Kennedy concedes that gender ideology benefits from public acts of support, and cites large attendances at Edinburgh Pride and Trans Pride in London. On this point we would agree with her.

Organisations supportive of gender ideology, such as Equality Network, have been feted by the Scottish establishment, including the Government, public bodies and celebrities. Attending Pride is easy and safe for people who believe in gender ideology. However, when members of Scottish Lesbians attended Edinburgh Pride in 2024 we were targeted with anti-lesbian abuse for asserting our same-sex attraction. When conformity is required, and enforced with abuse and threats, events such as Pride become displays of power for gender ideologues.

While Equality Network enjoys easy access to political decision-makers and government funding, organisations like ours are dependent on the voluntary work of individual women, managed around our jobs and other commitments. To describe our fight to keep our rights as women as being motivated by 'notoriety, power and money' is just offensive.

It is deeply disappointing to us that, in a country whose government provides dedicated funding to address equality issues, the voices of lesbians are often missing, and sometimes smeared and denigrated as they are in this interview. Our scant resources have allowed us to listen to the voices of marginalised and young lesbians, who have told us of their relief at the Supreme Court ruling that we are legally permitted groups and spaces for lesbians. It is shameful that the head of the Equality Network, rather than acknowledging these women's voices, resorts to tired and untrue smears.

Yours faithfully,

Lorraine Douglas and Jenny Willmott,

Directors, Scottish Lesbians