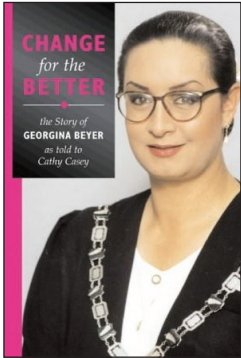# GEORGINA BEYER

b. November 1957

"It is important to allow people who want to be positive contributors of our society regardless of sex, race, creed and gender to reach their human potential."

CHANGE for the BETTER
the Story of GEORGINA BEYER as told to Cathy Casey

The first openly transgender person in the world to hold a national office, Georgina Beyer was elected a member of Parliament in New Zealand. Beyer's transformation from stripper and prostitute to politician is a testament to her remarkable fortitude.

Born biologically male, Beyer spent her early childhood on her grandparents' farm in rural New Zealand before moving to Wellington with her mother and stepfather. From an early age, Beyer recalls feeling like a girl trapped in a boy's body.

In her 20's, Beyer began working in the Wellington gay nightclub scene as a singer and drag queen performer, and then a prostitute. During a trip to Australia, she was attacked and raped by four men. Beyer refers to this experience as her defining moment.

In 1984, she had sexual reassignment surgery and forged a successful career as a film and television actress in Auckland. She was often typecast as a drag queen or streetwalker. From Auckland, Beyer moved to the small conservative town of Carterton, where she took a job as a youth social worker.

In 1993, Beyer was elected to the Carterton District Council. Two years later she was elected Mayor of Carterton, where she served for five years. In 1999, she won a seat in the New Zealand Parliament. While in Parliament, Beyer helped pass the Prostitution Reform Act, which decriminalizes prostitution and protects sex workers and their clients. She was instrumental in securing same-sex civil union benefits for New Zealanders.

Beyer chronicled her life in "Change for the Better: the Story of Georgina Beyer" (1999). A documentary film about her, "Georgie Girl" (2002), won international awards.

Beyer was a keynote speaker at the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights in Montreal in 2006. She retired from Parliament in 2007, saying, "I can now look for fresh challenges."

Georgina Beyer is the first transgender person elected to a national office. As a member of Parliament, she helped secure same-sex benefits for New Zealanders.

glbt HISTORY MONTH