

I am the mother of two children who were conceived through Donor Insemination and I feel it is imperative that we have Federal Legislation to protect the rights of all donor offspring. Without legislating across all jurisdictions we will continue to discriminate against certain individuals on the basis of where and when they are conceived.

Conduct of Clinics:

In 1991 we were referred to a private clinic in Westmead to join their Donor Insemination program. At the time the clinic was obtaining a lot of their sperm from Queensland and strongly advised us not to tell anyone (including our children) of their origins. Although we had already agreed that it was most important to tell our children the truth we were very naive of the implications this policy would have had on the future of our family should we have been successful in achieving a pregnancy.

In an effort to “reassure” us of anonymity and the possibility of keeping this ridiculous secret for the rest of our lives, the clinic suggested that if and when the legislation was changed, all the records which were stored in timber filing cabinets would be destroyed in some kind of “fire”. Although not entirely comfortable with this information, like so many couples we were desperate for a child and willing to do whatever it took to reach our goal. We were guided by these professionals and expected that they would be acting in our best interest. Sadly this was not the case.

Fortunately, our involvement in the Donor Conception Support Group gave us experience and insight into the impact that a policy of destroying records would have on our children. We were lucky enough to transfer to another program at a public hospital where we felt the records would be better maintained. After almost 20 years of personal involvement in Donor Insemination I am appalled that this type of policy existed and in fact still exists in some clinics. These clinics are professional units with the resources to make informed policy decisions. The long term experiences of adoption are well known and should have been taken into account. Years of self regulation have resulted in outdated policies and negligence in their duty of care.

Payment of Donors:

Whilst I feel that gamete donation should always remain altruistic, the re-imbusement of out of pocket expenses is a reasonable expectation.

Management of Data:

I feel that a national register detailing the identity of the donor, recipient and half siblings is necessary to ensure that all the relevant parties have access to this important information. For Donor Offspring who were conceived prior to any changes in the legislation, the information needs to be collected from existing clinics and made available to them once consent has been received from both parties. Future treatment & births need to be registered to ensure a commitment by parents to tell their children of their origins. The Register should be sufficiently promoted and easily accessed to encourage past donors.

Counseling & Support:

Counseling should be made mandatory prior to commencing on a Donor program. There are many issues that need to be discussed so that people can make an informed decision to go ahead. Only a properly qualified person who is objective can be suitable. The National Register should provide counseling for all parties that have decided to access identifying information, especially if they plan on making contact.

Number of Offspring:

I feel that donors should be limited to assisting 5 families.

The Rights of Donor Individuals:

As a parent I do not want to see my children disadvantaged in any way. Unless we see legislation introduced across the country, they will continue to be disadvantaged. At the moment they have no access to a full family medical history. All donor offspring deserve the right to be told of their origins. They also have a basic human right to know where they have come from. They also deserve to have their precious information collected and preserved responsibly. History has proven that leaving this record keeping up to the individual clinics has resulted in the destruction of records. We have to remember that our children were not involved in our decision and they should be granted the same rights as every other individual in our society.