Submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee of The Australian Senate.
The past and present practices of donor conception in Australia

I am making this submission as a parent of two donor conceived children. My children were born with the help of a donor who has also become a friend. I have been very open with people close to me and with my children most importantly(although they are still very young). I have opened my world, my family and friends, to my friend who donated to us. I will not comment much on past practices, I will only comment on what affects me now.
The past and present practices of donor conception in Australia, with particular reference to:
(a) donor conception regulation and legislation across federal and state jurisdictions.
I think the regulations and legislation need to be universal throughout the states. At the moment you can cross the border and completely different rules/legislation come into affect. I live in victoria for instance which seems overly regulated. We have police checks for couples doing IVF, the birth certificates now have an addendum for donor conceived children. I think the register is a necessary and very important thing, everyone has a right to know their genetic roots. This however does not need to be on birth certificates. As a new parent, my confidence takes knocks from things like this. I gave birth to my girls but everywhere I turn I am reminded by little things like this that they are different, that our family is different and that in some ways, some people will believe I am not their mother. I am their mother, I just needed some help and I will always want what is best for them, which is love and honesty.

(b) the conduct of clinics and medical services, including:

(i) payments for donors,
(ii) management of data relating to donor conception, and
(iii)provision of appropriate counselling and support services;

I don’t think donors should be paid, I would not like to have to tell the girls that I paid for their DNA or chose it, it was donated altruistically because someone wanted to help my husband and myself become parents. No donor should be out of pocket at all though and we should be able to show our thanks. I think clinics should actually look after reimbursement of even a known donors costs so that there is no party being taken advantage of and their should be set rules for this, as in what is appropriate.

The data should be managed how it was by the ITA previously in my opinion, not by Births, Deaths and Marriages. And this should be a federal register.

I don't think anyone knows all the intricacies of donor conception, donor relationships etc until it happens. My children will always know who their donor is, and have a relationship with her, because I believe it is what is best for them, and will help them to be well adjusted, self confident individuals. However I find that I am a lot more sensitive around my relationship with the donor and around my parenthood than I thought I would be. So i think counselling from people who have some idea about all these intricate relationships should be available readily for all parties. This is important especially after a child has been born because i for one I feel completely discarded and like no one understands how I feel when we are discussing rights and relationships relating to donor conception. No party should have to pay for this expert counselling, it should be available on an as needs basis.

(c) the number of offspring born from each donor with reference to the risk of consanguine relationships;

I think 5 is the maximum number of families that should be allowed

(d) the rights of donor conceived individuals.
These are of course paramount and I hope what I have said conveys how much I believe this, there however needs to be more balance. We are a family and this unit needs to be protected as well, I am the girls mother, my relationship with them needs to be protected.