

As a biological mother of a donor conceived 17 year old son, (NSW) I am writing this submission in an attempt to help inspire the opening up of a way for the growing numbers of donor offspring to connect with each other as well as with their donors.

This is their basic human right.

My son is an IVF offspring, my egg and donor sperm. He was born in Sydney in April 1993.

Some of my son's donor's details were given to me (handwritten) a year after he was born, by a sympathetic lab assistant who I approached at the clinic. The information states that my son's donor was a medical student, born in 1968. I was given basic descriptive details of his height, build, eye colour, hair colouring, race, educational level, a few hobbies/interests, and his stated reason for being a donor.

Apart from those non-identifying details, the report disclosed that my son had 10 half-siblings. This refers to those offspring born through that clinic, and from that same donor sperm at the time I enquired, 1997. Of course more may have been born since then.

How will we know? Hopefully the new legislation will help. To be fair it definitely needs to be retrospective.

Below is a short story of a possible exciting and coincidental 'close encounter' with my son's donor.

In early 2007, it happened that my son's closest school friend, was being treated in hospital for a very serious condition. The child received great care and under the excellent treatment that one particular Doctor helped establish, he was able to return home after one month, recovering very well and remains in good health today....

During the child's early days at the hospital, his Mother saw what she called "an overwhelmingly strong resemblance" between her son's treating Doctor and my 14 year old son, as she observed him working on her very sick boy. Even her son himself remarked, "it was just like having a grown up version of my best friend sticking lots of needles into me".

Everything matched, from his physical appearance and the way he walked and moved, to his profession as well as the age of the Doctor, and the approximate age my son's donor would have been.

Having regard to the IVF Clinic's information that my son's donor was a Medical Student together with the sick boy's Mother's careful observations, I took the view that it is my duty to my son to follow this up. Sadly I had no way to continue the search. But I tried. The sick boy's mother had taken notice of the Doctor's name, but that was as far as we were able to get. I did write a letter to send to this Doctor and prepared it with great sensitivity and care, even consulting with a founding DCSG member. Sadly we have never found anywhere to send this very important letter.

I feel very lucky to have my son, so I am always grateful to whoever his sperm donor was, therefore if it was this Doctor then I would like to thank him, but if not at least I made the attempt. With a formal Donor registry set up, we would have so much more chance to find our children's origins and so many donor offspring would finally be able to feel at peace about their personal history, and crucial knowledge of their medical history would then be available as a result.

Since he was a toddler, my son has always been aware of his true biological origins and doesn't have any issues about it at all. However, knowing he is donor offspring, he has a healthy and natural curiosity about who his donor might be. He is a very intelligent, loving and well adjusted boy.

We would be so happy to have a chance to have any contact. I know that my son would love to have some more information about his donor as well as a chance to connect with his half siblings, especially before he meets any of them by chance and they fall in love... there are so many in this same situation clearly.

I appreciated the information in the hand written document which I was given when I approached the IVF clinic lab staff, in 1997, after my son was 3 years old. The staff who helped me said that was all they could give me. The IVF Clinic has since closed and the clinic which now looks after all the old records has no contact details for my son's donor and so cannot help me.

Hopefully you will be able to help us all in this crucial matter, and we look forward to a future of open access to our children's origins.

I would be very pleased to have the opportunity to present this to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee of the Australian Senate (Re: Inquiry into the past and present practices of donor conception in Australia) at any future Public Hearings. This definitely takes priority.