



Dear Secretary,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for accepting my late submission.

I am writing in regard to the *Inquiry into Donor Conception in Australia*. I am a single mother of 3 children, a 2 year old daughter & 6 month old twin boys; all conceived via the same known donor under a private arrangement. I am also a member of Solo Mums by Choice Australia.

In my situation with my donor I have been extremely fortunate in the way things have worked out. We have no issues what so ever concerning custody, parental rights (as these are solely mine as per our verbal agreement), information about the children, contact and the children knowing the truth of their origins have all been agreed to and so far adhered to. Even so if a legal written contract had been available we would have both agreed to do one to protect the rights of my children and ourselves. We would have also made use of counseling if this had been made available to us.

At first I tried to conceive via a clinic in Sydney but after 3 failed attempts found the cost to be prohibitive, not to mention the difficulties and limitations of choosing a donor. I went at a time when changes were about to take place with regards to identity release donor sperm. The list available at the clinic was full of colored stickers indicating things such as donor's wishes like, willingness to be identified and sperm being used by lesbians, singles or couples. There were also limitations on race and no overseas sperm was available. It was for these reasons I decided to take a break and wait for the right opportunity to take the known donor/private arrangement route.

Having gone through a clinic though I was aware that in choosing a donor from a list the sperm is screened and health checks are carried out on the recipient as well. With mine already done my known donor agreed upon my request to have his checks done and as such would recommend that these checks, including the right to have any donations screened by the recipients themselves, should be done in all private arrangements.

This is the first and only time my donor has donated but he has not ruled out doing so again under the right circumstances. So I also think that it is important that there is a voluntary sibling DNA register.

Of current concern to me though is the way my children and I have been treated by Centrelink and NSW Births Deaths & Marriages. So much so that I have sought advice from Legal Aid on both matters and made an official complaint about the latter.

On lodging my parenting payment claim with Centrelink for my twins I was interrogated for information on the 'father's' details. I tried to explain to the client officer that they have no father as such, rather a sperm donor and provided a letter from my doctor as proof. As it was a private arrangement and not through a clinic the officer continued to demand the name of the donor at which point I refused and asked to see a manager. When the manager came out she agreed with me and proceeded with the claim. It was then that I commented that I had no such trouble claiming for my daughter 20 months ago. On hearing this they looked up her file and told me that was because she was not listed as my biological child. I could not believe it. I still do not know if her status has been changed or what the status of my twins is, that is what Legal Aid is investigating for me. I therefore wish to recommend a clear and consistent policy for Centrelink to follow in dealing with donor conceived children and one that does not discriminate between clinic and private arrangements.

With regards to Births Deaths & Marriages, on filling out the paper work for registering the birth details of my twins, one of the questions asked was: Previous children from the same relationship? I listed my daughter's name in response. This to me is a truthful and appropriate response; even though we have no

sexual or romantic relationship, we do indeed have a relationship: That of a donor and recipient. Therefore, all 3 of my children are full siblings and this should be noted on the birth certificates for the twins. For legal reasons I cannot and will not list the donor's name on the birth certificate the way it is set out now as this would make him a parent and afford him all the rights and obligations that go with it. (I am also aware that this is a problem in other states regardless of the donation being by a clinic or private arrangement.) When their certificates were issued without their sibling's name listed I wrote an official complaint along with an offer to provide a letter from my Doctor along with statutory declarations from myself and my donor that they are all are indeed of the same biological origins. So far I have only received a receipt of acknowledgement and told it has been passed on to management. Legal Aid is looking into whether this is a matter of law or if it is at the discretion of the Registrar. As such I wish to recommend that all states change the way they handle the matters of donor siblings on birth certificates. If it can be proven that the donor children are full siblings regardless of the way they were conceived (via clinic or private arrangement) without having to list the donor as a parent, siblings should be listed. It also could be taken further by including a donor section whereby you could add donor codes or names (if agreed to by the donor) so the children have another avenue of keeping their origins on permanent record.

### In summary I wish to recommend:

- That all private donor arrangements be covered under a federal legislation that would ensure the rights of all donor conceived children, the health and wellbeing of all parties involved and that contracts outlining the details of any arrangements are made lawful before any donor children are conceived. (This would also make sure no fraudulent claims are made on the following 2 recommendations).
- That Centrelink devise a consistent non-discriminatory policy in dealing with donor conceived children.
- That there is a consistent state approach to registering donor conceived full siblings, a separate section for donor information that does not impact on parental rights or obligations and serves as a record for donor conceived individuals.
- The establishment of a voluntary DNA sibling registry.
- That affordable and appropriate counseling and access to screening of donor sperm be made available to all parties at all stages of a private donor arrangement.

Thanks again for accepting my submission,