

I am the mother of a beautiful, happy and healthy three year old donor conceived son. When I initially considered using donor conception I investigated the option of Australian donors and was dismayed by the minimal information provided about sperm donors. The information provided included height, weight, a one word general health description (good, excellent, poor or fair), education level (tertiary or university) and a couple of hobbies. In short it was an extremely basic list and not one which provided any sense as to the person the donor is, or his medical history.

For various reasons I opted not to pursue an Australian donor and was fortunate to discover I had the option of using an international sperm bank. My son was conceived using "open" donor sperm from one of the many American sperm banks. The reasons I choose an American donor were as follows;

American donors opt whether or not they are "open" to contact, identifying information being released when the child is 18 thus providing me with an option that ensures my child will have access to this information should he choose.

I was able to receive extensive information on the donor including a medical summary dating back to both maternal and paternal grandparents and photos of the donor himself (as a child and an adult). As a result my son will be able to have questions such as his cultural background answered as well as simple details like the family structure of the donor, where he grew up and what he studied at college. I believe this will help eliminate some of the mystery surrounding this man who assisted in giving him the precious gift of life.

There is a lack of sperm donors within Australia and it is essential international donors continue to be available. International donors are also easily able to be monitored through social security numbers thus ensuring contact between clinic and donor can be maintained.

There are several issues which I believe need review and I am hoping this enquiry will seek to regulate in a way which is beneficial for all donor conceived children.

Freedom of information

Irrespective of when a child was conceived they have the moral right to information in relation to their identity. This should apply retrospectively as in the case of adopted children. Denying children this basic right is inhumane. Donor information should be easily available not only to the child but to the family of the donor should they choose. Ideally if both parties consent, information should be available prior to the child turning 18.

Information needs to be more detailed than the basics currently supplied with Australian donors. The more information that can be supplied the more it will assist donor conceived children in having a sense of their heritage and an understanding of the person who contributed to their birth.

Medical information is a necessity for all the obvious reasons and a detailed medical history of all donors dating back to both maternal and paternal grandparents should be a minimum requirement. In addition, it needs to be mandatory for clinics to pass on new medical information relating to a donor (which could impact the health of offspring) to all children conceived as a result of the donor.

Regulation of donor numbers

Regulation of donor numbers is essential to minimise the chances of consanguine relationships. The current NSW limit of five is a fair and acceptable level. The limit of

the donor whom I used is 40 families worldwide and I believe this is too large. It is essential a national registry be established to manage the records of donor conceived children. There is currently no obligation for clinics to share and compare donor details and as a result no way of guaranteeing the maximum family limit of 5 families per donor is adhered. Approximately eighteen months ago I discovered two women in Queensland who were using the same donor sperm as I used to conceive my son. They had both been told no other clinic in Australia had access to this donor (which is obviously not the case). Accessing the donor sibling register in American I have discovered a third family in Queensland who used the same donor, and, as I am aware of at least two other families in Sydney who have used the donor, the family limit of five has already been breached. A national register must be established to enforce the family limit. It is frustrating I have had to access an American donor sibling registry to discover details about other Australian families who have utilised the donor I chose.

In the case of people importing sperm from overseas to inseminate at home (rather than through a clinic) there could be a mandatory requirement for all international clinics to contact a national Australian donor register before releasing donor gametes to a client. This would ensure family numbers are not breached because of non clinic involvement. "Family" numbers are only recorded in the case of live births. Potentially a family limit may be reached whilst there are several other families pregnant as a result of the same donor. Family numbers should be counted as soon as a pregnancy is confirmed. If a pregnancy does not continue and a woman chooses not to utilise the donor further, family numbers can be adjusted accordingly.

Recording of information on Birth Certificates

Current regulations state that when a single woman has a second child born from the same donor as her first child, the older sibling cannot be listed as a sibling on the second child's birth certificate. The reason given by Births, Deaths and Marriages is "children born from single women are classified as not being born from a relationship and as such cannot be listed as siblings". This is unacceptable.

This enquiry is long overdue and I am pleased a review into Donor Conception within Australia is being conducted. The rights of children conceived as a result of donor conception must be the most important consideration when you are reviewing the legislation and regulation. They have a right to identifying and adequate information about all aspects of their ancestry and, information relating to all half siblings.

I would like to conclude by adding my son is very much part of a "normal" family. He is loved and adored by his grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and a myriad of friends. He is happy, well adjusted and will be raised knowing he was conceived very much out of love. He is being given age appropriate information in relation to his conception and will continue to be provided with the truth as he grows. There are no secrets in our family surrounding his conception. Ensuring information in relation to his donor is readily and easily accessible as he continues to grow is essential to his ongoing wellbeing.