

## Donor Conception Inquiry

As a sole parent to 3 young children, aged 9, 6 and 3, all conceived by the same anonymous donor, through \_\_\_\_\_, I have more than a vested interest in this Committee's current inquiry into Donor Conception practices around Australia. My first child was conceived in 2000, prior to any state or national guidelines being developed around the use of donors. I believe there was legislation in other states, however, it seemed to be up to each \_\_\_\_\_ specialist as to the protocols around the use of donated sperm. For instance, I was unable to claim for Medicare funding for my treatments, whereas my second and third conceptions were claimable.

At the time, there was no support group and in hindsight a 30 minute counselling session can't even begin to describe how a lifetime of anonymity of half of a person's genetic makeup will impact on them. I was made aware at the time that the donor I chose was not willing to be known to the child when they turned 18. It was a truly anonymous donation. What did that mean to me, a 32 year old woman desperate for a baby? I had the foresight of 9 months, not 18 years. I don't regret my decision and I would do it again and again for the beautiful, wonderful, intelligent and caring children that I now have. I'm now a founding member of SMC Australia and extremely grateful for the support provided. It's really not good enough that the support I, and my children, have received from there wasn't given by the clinic.

As my children have grown older, they have, of course, asked many questions about the lack of a Dad – “Why haven't I got a Dad?” “Is my Dad dead?” are some of the questions I've had. These have proven to be the easy questions. My children have all the love they need, and more, from a one parent family. It's not the quantity of parenting, it's the quality.

The very recent article “Experiences of offspring searching for and contacting their donor siblings and donor” - - shows that the overwhelming majority of donor conceived children and young adults do search for their donor and/or donor siblings, largely for identify and/or curiosity purposes.

Identity is another issue. The development of a family tree at primary school bought me to discuss in detail the fact that my children do have a father – just not a Dad. This man has been shown as “Donor Father” on the family tree, and probably will be forever – from one generation to the next – the “unknown figure” on the tree – both physically and psychologically.

Knowing how other states regulate (or at least guide) their donor conception practices, I have since contacted \_\_\_\_\_ to ask if they can make contact with our donor, and keep that contact on an annual basis. We are hoping that if he does change his mind about releasing his identity at any stage in the future, that the lines of communication are open. I do believe that the \_\_\_\_\_ policy on this is ad-hoc and unratified. Apparently contact was made in 2007 where he reinforced his desire to remain anonymous, and requested no further contact. Precedent shows however, that many donors may change their minds and I strongly believe that contact must be kept for the best interests of all parties involved, but most specifically the donor offspring – the children.

For the sake of humanity, clinics MUST be regulated, with regular independent audits. Good policy and procedures, standardised across Australia, MUST be developed as a part of the regulation. And lastly, the innocents in the process, the children, MUST be a first priority.

Legislation MUST be retrospective – why is it fair and just – and Australia is supposed to be a fair and just society - that children born at a different time or in a different state to my children, have the right to their identity when my child DOES NOT? Identity is something that 99% of Australians take for granted.

I would also like to point out that findings from a recent “research study” were published entitled “My Daddy’s name is Donor”. The Senate must be made aware, if not already, that this so-called research did not undergo ethical or peer review, and the lead researcher was extremely biased. Full, non-biased information can be found at

Furthermore, the 2005 research study on open-identity donor offspring, undertaken with ethical and peer review by the University of California, “Adolescents with open-identity sperm donors: reports from 12–17 year olds” J.E. Scheib<sup>1,2,5</sup>, M. Riordan<sup>3</sup> and S. Rubin states the following

Most youths (75.9%) reported always knowing, and were somewhat to very comfortable with their conception origins. All but one felt knowing had a neutral to positive impact on their relationship with their birth mother and, separately, co-parent. The youths’ top question about the donor was, ‘What’s he like?’ and >80% felt at least moderately likely to request his identity and pursue contact. Finally, of those who might contact the donor, 82.8% would do so to learn more about him, with many believing it would help them learn more about themselves. No youth reported wanting money and few (6.9%) wanted a father/child relationship. We also discuss differences found among youths from different household types. CONCLUSIONS: The majority of the youths felt comfortable with their origins and planned to obtain their donor’s identity, although not necessarily at age 18.

There’s only one solution to donor conception practices. It’s a non discriminative, federally legislated, and retrospective, industry which is governed appropriately, audited regularly and independently and ensures that children will obtain identifying donor information at an appropriate age.