

To the Senate Inquiry into the Past & Present Practices of Donor Conception in Australia,

As parents of two donor conceived children (10 and 13 year olds) we feel very strongly that all donor conceived people should have access to information about their donor no matter which state or territory in Australia they were born and no matter when they were born. Our donor was anonymous and the children conceived with the assistance of a reproductive medicine clinic.

Anonymity & Voluntary Registers

At the time we embarked on the donor conception process we accepted the view of the Clinic that anonymity was not only necessary to encourage donation, but also appropriate for us and for the children. We also accepted that records might later be destroyed. We realized shortly after having our first child, that it was not in the children's best interests not to be able to access information into the future, and that it was, and remains, very important to our children that they should be able to access at least non-identifying information on an ongoing basis, and the ability to identify who their broader genetic family (including half siblings) is.

In South Australia, where we live, there is no voluntary register and we cannot lodge information in relation to our children and their donor code on a register, and expect to be able to check in later years whether they have any half siblings, and whether those half siblings are willing to identify themselves for the purpose of either establishing contact by way of support, or for discounting the possibility of consanguinity.

We consider that there are two possible scenarios where consanguinity could occur, the first being where two donor conceived people meet, the second, where a donor conceived person meets a naturally conceived descendant of their donor. In this second scenario, a voluntary register is unlikely to assist. However, prohibiting anonymity for future donors would prevent this from occurring. We therefore support compulsory identification of donors for the future.

In the current situation donor conceived people are the only group of people in Australia who have information about their biological parentage deliberately kept from them by organisations and governments.

The denial of this information can be psychologically harmful to donor conceived people. It may also be detrimental to their physical wellbeing by preventing them from having a full family medical history.

We accept that donors who donated on the basis of anonymity should not now be forced retrospectively to identify themselves. However, if there were a voluntary register available in SA, should the donor who generously allowed our children to be conceived, later change his view in relation to anonymity, he could easily make himself (or his relevant information) known to our children, and if both parties so wished, establish communication to our children's benefit. Neither we, nor our children, currently seek a relationship with the donor. However, we do envisage a time when our children may

have further questions for their donor, and note that this has already occurred on one occasion through the auspices of our Clinic, at which time the donor indicated that he wanted no further communication.

Preservation of records

We consider that it is vital that the destruction of any records be prohibited, in the same way that adoption records must be preserved. The rights of donor conceived children should be the same as those of adoptive children.

Payment of donors

We consider that the donation of eggs or sperm should not be matter for financial gain for the donor. Recompense for actual costs incurred is not an issue of concern to us, and should be permissible to ensure these generous people are not out of pocket through the donation process.

Appropriate Counselling

At all stages during the reproductive medical process we felt that we received appropriate and helpful counseling, and that this was always available for whatever concerns we had or may have. We also received adequate support when we requested it after the children were born, and at the stage when we wanted to inform the children of the means of their conception.

Advice to children

We consider, having been through the process and considered the matter very carefully ourselves, that it is important that every child know the circumstances of their conception, whether that be by way of adoption or donor conception. It is the right of those children to be informed. We do not have a strong view in relation to the manner in which this could or should be achieved, but consider the Victorian solution not unreasonable as a means to achieve that end (ie not compelling, but encouraging parents to tell their children, by independently informing those children at 18).

We ask that the Committee recommends to the Federal Government that they should enact legislation to give all Australian Donor Conceived People the right to have access to all available information on their donors and to their half siblings, and that voluntary registers should be required to be set up either by the Federal Government or by the relevant State bodies and centrally coordinated.

We consider this an important matter for consideration by Government on behalf of the silent minority, which has little scope to voice its concerns due to the nature of the issue.