

Submission Text: My name is Bernard Robertson, and my wife is Michelle Robertson. [REDACTED]

Last year, on October 16, we tragically lost our daughter, [REDACTED], in a motor vehicle accident on Forrest Road, near Winchelsea, Victoria. [REDACTED] was 31 years old at the time of her passing. She was a single mum by choice and did not have a partner.

[REDACTED] had a beautiful daughter named [REDACTED], who was five years old at the time of the accident. [REDACTED] was conceived through IVF sperm donation.

[REDACTED] lived with Michelle and myself in our house in Geelong West from the time she was born. As part of the journey of bringing [REDACTED] into the world, Michelle and I agreed to financially and emotionally support [REDACTED]. As [REDACTED] was already living with us, and was continuing to live with us after [REDACTED] was born, we renovated our home to accommodate them. We played an active role in raising [REDACTED] alongside her mother, which allowed [REDACTED] to return to work and we would care for [REDACTED]. For all intents and purposes, we were her other partner. [REDACTED] was contributing to the household costs after the renovation and therefore this was a co-dependant situation.

Since [REDACTED]'s passing, Michelle and I have gone to the Family Court of Australia to become [REDACTED]'s Legal Guardians, honouring our promise to [REDACTED] that if anything were to happen to her, we would raise [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] was employed as a nurse at the time of the accident.

This has been a very hard time for our family both emotionally but also financially.

Regrettably TAC does not recognise Michelle and I as being a legal partner which means we miss out on significant financial support to raise [REDACTED]. This we feel discriminates against [REDACTED] and places her at a disadvantage. This could also be a disincentive to other people who may be placed in the same situation but could not afford to take on the financial responsibility, even though they would be the best suited person/people.

Under the current Legislation we receive a weekly payment of \$225 for [REDACTED]. An additional \$225,000 was put in Trust for [REDACTED] to receive when she is 18.

If we were to be recognised as the other partner, we could receive up to \$1620 per week as well as the lump sum from TAC, which is currently in trust, and it would be paid to us instead, which we could use in raising [REDACTED] (See TAC link - <https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/what-to-do-after-an-accident/how-to-claim/when-someone-dies#partner>)

As it is now, we are needing to change our work hours and sell our house to financially help with supporting [REDACTED] as our plans were to be both retiring in the next 2-3 years.

We feel the legislation has not kept up with the modern-day society where more women are choosing to be single mothers by choice, where there is not the same level of support from TAC. We feel they are treated financially different if something were to happen, because these women consciously choose not to have a partner in their life.

We believe there should be a provision made that in the situation of these women not having a legal partner, there should be a nominated or legally appointed person/people through the Family Court who would receive the same provision as a partner would receive.

Michelle and I feel passionate about this and we want to bring it before the current Government to try to make the changes needed. We are very keen to advocate this.

We know [REDACTED] would be proud that we are pursuing this as she was proud to be a mother by choice and has empowered other women to embark on a similar journey.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, this is about the child, having the same opportunities.

We would love the opportunity to meet with you