

July 25th 2010

A mother's story and request.

My son was born in [REDACTED]. He was conceived with the assistance of an anonymous sperm donor through the Epworth Hospital.

[REDACTED] He does not know the truth of his conception. My husband and I divorced [REDACTED] At the time of his conception and later his birth we were overjoyed. We gave little thought to the consequences.

As time went by I began to have deep reservations about this secret which we were keeping from him.

I felt that he had the right to know but I also knew that the legislation would not allow me to get his records to pass on to my son.

I also felt that because my husband and I had divorced, I did not want to tell him without my ex husband consenting. I did not want this to be a trigger which may have caused damage to their relationship. I did approach his father about this, but he did not want his son to know.

So a few more years went by.

Every few years the issue arises for me again and keeps rearing its ugly head. There is a nagging feeling there that he has the right to know. But then when I realise that he can't get access to his records, I meet another stumbling block again, and the issue goes underground again for me.

I have kept every article which I have come across in the newspapers. I have a copy of a children's book written by The New South Wales Infertility Social Workers Group, and which I bought 2 copies because I thought I had lost the first.

And still I have not told him.

I have spoken to counsellors over the years. I have been in touch with Monash medical centre which has the records and come against a brick wall. Donors before 1988 have anonymity I am told.

On reflection I believe the main reason I have not told him is because I know he can't get access to information about his biological father. I do not want him to spend the rest of his life longing to know about half his origins, when legislation won't allow him that access. Yet if he had been born after 1988 he would have access to these records on his 18th birthday I do not want him to be like some children, who search forever.

Why should I put him through this agony?

I believe that [REDACTED] years ago couple like my ex husband and I and the medical people who assisted us all had good intentions, helping infertile people like ourselves produce a baby.

They made my childhood dream of becoming a mother come true. I did not want to live if I could not have a baby.

I thank them for that.

I have always told him that he was the most wanted child in the whole wide world and he knows that. But he needs to know and has the right to know the whole truth.

However 25 years on the dream has a dark side.

I battle with the knowledge I have and that I keep from our son.

I would say to any family who undertake assisted reproduction, please please tell your child when they are old enough to understand and at a young enough age to grow up with this knowledge. At least now they will have access to their records. You do not need to go through what I have gone through.

I guess you could say all of us were ignorant at the time 25 years ago. We made a mistake offering anonymity to the donors. We need to correct that mistake and learn from it and donors need to understand that too.

Our desire to know our origins is very primal. You only need to look at the T.V. shows at the moment where people are tracing their ancestry.

I believe we have an obligation to our children to tell them the truth – how can they trust people if even their parents don't tell them the truth?

I believe it would be tragic if the medical Doctors at the time in the late 70's and early 80's , who assisted us with the program, went to their grave holding on to knowledge that my son and others like him, have the right to know. And time is running out. I ask them as well as the Parliament of Australia to reconsider the law as it stands that prevents pre 1988 conceived children from getting information about their origins. We need to learn from our mistakes, and we can't move forward as a compassionate nation if we don't acknowledge and correct our mistakes.

I do not want to be put in a no win situation where I do the right thing by my son and tell him the truth, and then tell him that he can't get the truth from the powers that be. How unfair is that.

A way forward.

I would like to see a Federal Donor register and the same laws across all states

I would like all pre 1988 and beyond information to be stored in one secure place --

I would like to see legislation brought in that recinded the 1988 legislation that granted anonymity to donors pre 1988. This would have to be handled very sensitively and it would have to be firmly acknowledged that a grave mistake was made offering this anonymity. This is not about blame.

A central register set up that would advise donors and offspring how best to make contact, and support for that purpose.