

"I am putting this submission into the inquiry, not as a professional, as I am not qualified as a Dr or the like. I am experienced however, in that I am a recipient parent of an 8 year old boy who was created via anonymous egg donation. During the initial stages of trying to become pregnant and being pregnant I was in fact very happy to have been "lucky" enough to have an anonymous egg donor. It was after my son was born and I felt such unconditional and deep love for him that I started realizing that he deserved so much more from me and that I had a responsibility to him to make sure that he was never to be deceived, and that he would always have my support in his having contact with his biological family. Therefore he would never feel that he would need to protect me and my feelings in wanting to know his biological family.....the other half of "who he is".

It is my belief that in order for the practice of donor conception to continue in Australia, that there needs to be complete transparency, and the human rights of all parties involved to be of consideration - especially the human being who is intentionally being created (the child) by those already able to give their consent , (recipient parents and donors) simply because they already exist.

We need to view this practice, not as medical intervention for infertile people, but, as creating a new human life for recipient parents to bring into the world. This new human life, should, without a doubt be born with the same rights as all other children : adopted, fostered and of course last but not least, naturally conceived.

THE DONORS : Donors need to be aware that by donating eggs/sperm, that they are not simply donating a body part to help people with infertility, nor is it like donating kidneys, hearts or lungs to save a life. What donors are doing in FACT, is playing a HUGE part in creating a new human life. Nothing can change the FACT, that the donor is and always will be half of WHO THE CHILD IS. The Donor's family will always be the child's biological family. This can never be changed. Is it "right" or "just" that one person in whole generations of family history can simply donate away a "person" from that family? We need to consider that this is what is happening. Donors should not be paid to donate away prospective children. To "donate" is simply that - children are not a commodity to be bought or sold and this should also refer to eggs/sperm as it is the intention that these will in fact become children. There needs to be at the very least, an acknowledgment by the donor that it is understood that from their actions it is intended that a human child is born and with that will also come certain responsibilities such as transparency and the child needing contact information, family biological history, knowledge of siblings, relationships and friendships with all biological family. I am not implying responsibility of financial support or important decision making in the infants life.....there is still a need for the child's nuclear family unit and for the well being and complexities of marriage to be in consideration. I am however stating that I believe donor conceived people, in the very least, need to be given the same rights as adopted children. Just because they are given away pre-conception vs post conception should be of no significance. They have still been created by the joining of egg/sperm from 2 individual people - as have the rest of us. So WHY (?) should this be of less significance for them or for us? Obviously it is intentional that donor conceived people will grow, living with one of their biological parents - but - the missing other half is what creates the "whole" person. The donor conceived person should at all times have access to knowledge of this family. It is absolutely necessary that all donor conceived people are entitled to retrospective access to their biological families and especially also including knowledge of any full or half siblings.

THE RECIPIENT PARENT: Recipient parents have been medically diagnosed - "infertile". This cannot be reversed, however technology has provided us with the ability for "others" to "donate" to us. It is my opinion that if we as recipient parents, "choose" to use this technology and receive donated eggs/sperm, then we also need to realise that we have a responsibility to the child created, to ensure they are emotionally supported and allowing them contact and knowledge of their biological family, in which they have been donated away from. Any relationship formed on unconditional love, honesty and support will not be compromised by divulging the truth. Recipient parents need not worry. Recipient parents still have the rights to parenting, decision making, everyday care for the well being of the child, until they become well informed, healthy adults and beyond. I have also been appalled at the

availability of donor conception "treatment" being so easily obtained without any interrogation or insight to the recipient family circumstances when obviously a child is intended on being "placed" in this home. Being able to afford fertility treatment does not automatically mean that the recipient parent and family will be able to provide the love, honesty and emotional support needed in this situation. A quick look at the adoption process and compared, its amazingly biased that we can take an anonymous persons biological offspring, simply because we can pay the costs. What does a grown adult (or maybe teenager) donor conceived person make of this? That their well being was insignificant? Were they considered at all? Or was the focus completely on the parents and the donors? How can it be pre-determined that it is of no significance who their biological family is? It is common knowledge that just about anyone can go out and conceive a baby anytime with people they don't know ie one night stands (this is often used as arguement for the practice of donor conception) - however this is IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR. People will feel sorry for this child created because of his/her circumstances. The same is being done to donor conceived people only this is worse because it is "planned" and "intentional" - yet we dont feel sorry for them. Why? Because they have 2 loving parents? The "one night stand child" may also end up with 2 loving parents. Does this make it all less irresponsible to the child? Irresponsible behaviour should not flow over into fertility treatment/intervention. What gives us the right to be irresponsible to these people? There is currently no "appropriate" counselling before, during or after donor conception for recipient parents or donors no doubt. We are told that it is our decision whether we tell our children the truth. We dont have to BUT it seems that it could be wise to be honest. This is not what I would call correct guidance as to what would be most appropriate for the child There needs to be follow up after a donor conceived child is born and perhaps this should even extend to the donor. However currently we are interviewed before entering into donor conception and asked what we feel and then we go off and it is completely up to us as to what we do next ie. Pretend we are in a completely normal situation when in fact we are not - and we know it..

I also believe that birth certificates should indicate that donor conception has taken place and that the donors name should be a part of this legal document as to who this person is, as this will prevent the amount of deception able to be inflicted upon donor conceived people. Currently I believe that birth certificates for donor conceived people are fraudulent. They do not state who this person truly is. Is there any other legal document in existence in which it is lawful to falsify?

THE CHILD: A human being will always see themselves as just that. We would never think of ourselves as anything but. To be human is to be part of a long line of biological history - 2 sides. To have one side missing is not idyllic. It is not ok to do this intentionally. It is perceived that donor conceived children should be happy and maybe even grateful because they have parents who love them dearly and they were desperately wanted. This is wonderful and the child will no doubt equally return the love to his/her parents. These children will most likely have a wonderful life BUT there is family that this person deserves to have the opportunity to know. Biological Grandparents (who may not have wanted their grandchildren donated away), half brothers, half sisters, uncles, aunties and cousins. People that would/could make our cherished donor conceived children "whole" - and who also deserve consideration. Donor conceived children need transparency. They need to know who they are. They need to be able to form relationships/friendships with biological family in childhood. We need to acknowledge them not as possessions but as "people" who just like us, can form all kinds of relationships and love different people in different ways. Donor conceived people should not have to deal with being the "secret" or "hidden" member of a family. This is not healthy.

Its high time that the whole process of donor conception, laws and morals were kept up with the technology we have, to create families such as mine. Our laws need to be uniform across Australia and bring with them the responsibility these people deserve. Laws on donor conception need to mimic those of adoption and be made retrospective such as adoption has been .Whether a person is taken into a family before or after conception or birth is not the issue - the end result is still the same for the child no matter when this took place. Any relationship will only survive with love, honesty and transparency. It is the human way and the only way to "right" the "wrongs" and

"discrimination" in our treatment of our "donated generation". If the Australian Govt is serious in its intentions to create human rights regulations for donor conceived people then it will make the changes necessary for the well being of the people we are creating.

It is all well and good and much appreciated that there are voluntary registers set up in certain states of Australia however.....because this is voluntary and the vast majority of parents are still not divulging the truth to their children - I believe only 30% of parents actually tell their children of their conceptions....how is one to know that they should perhaps be making contact with these registers?. Also if a "donor" moves state where laws are different to the state the donation was made in, or does not keep updating information - where does this leave the donor conceived child? In need of counseling? Which brings me to another point I would like to make. Children conceived naturally, and their parents do not require counseling. However by even acknowledging that counseling is needed to begin with is also acknowledging that this practice has flaws which is most likely going to be an emotionally unhealthy situation for the donor conceived person, the recipient parents or the donors. And we go along and do this intentionally without any uniform laws across Australia.

I sincerely believe that in the best interests of the people we have created, through choices we have made, we need to give all donor conceived people retrospective access to information about themselves and "their" biological families.

I am happy to be contacted regarding my submission and for my name to be published along with it./

Sincerely
Susan Hurst

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