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Executive Officer
Victorian Parliament Law Reform Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002

12 August 2011.

Inquiry into access by donor-conceived people to information about donors.

I am a person who was adopted during the period of "closed" adoption practices. I am very familiar with the lifelong feelings of loss and separation from kin.

Like many donor conceived (DC) persons, I live with disconnection from one half of my genealogical identity.

Since the 1970s, I have been an active part of the world-wide (but particularly Australian) adoption community. As a provider of post-adoption services, I have over the years, assisted many thousands of persons whose lives have been affected by adoption and more recently, donor conception, in Victoria and overseas.

I actively supported adoption law reform in Victoria. I am a founding member of VANISH and Tangledwebs Inc. and a facilitator of a support group for adult adopted and donor conceived persons.

My experience makes me acutely aware of the issues surrounding donor conception practices and how, in many ways, they resemble past attitudes and practices in adoption.

It distresses me that it is now 2011 and donor conceived adults whose conception occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, are still without legal entitlement to access information concerning their genealogical origins. I and others have been drawing this important issue to the attention of the fertility clinics and Government for the last thirty years at least, since before many of the young DC adults, with whom I now am in contact, were conceived.

Unsurprisingly, many of these people are upset and angry, that they are as a matter of deliberate policy and practice, being deprived of access to vital

personal information. I find it deplorable that the last Victorian Government saw fit to enshrine this in legislation as recently as 2008 and that the present Victorian Government seems to be delaying the righting of this wrong.

Victorian law gives more weight to the "rights" of the sperm donor and the parent/s who want a child. This is, of course, contrary to the expressed guiding principles of the Assisted Reproductive Technology Act, which states that the rights of the child are paramount. There is a view that "love" can compensate for a donor conceived person's loss of family origins. I refute that view, from my own personal experience and from having spoken to many others suffering from such loss. Genuine "love" should not disregard the needs and rights of a DC person to know the truth of his/her conception and the identity of genealogical kin.

These needs and rights are, of course, now well accepted in the case of adoption even though the information released to an adopted person may sometimes reveal tragic circumstances surrounding the origins of the child. Donor conception records are inherently less likely to reveal anything of this nature, which makes the implementation far less controversial and further delay indefensible.