

# Submission to Senate Committee on Donor Conception Legislation

## Making donor conception a better experience

**Our story is context for our proposal below.** After the news of premature menopause and some years of discernment, we sought an egg donor. We didn't want the complication of involving family, nor was this possible anyway. So we searched for a donor and found how difficult it was to find someone who would do it altruistically. Over the time of searching, we saw hundreds of advertisements by other couples wanting donors.

In addition to this, we were dismayed at the treatment we received from the leading fertility clinics here. As soon as they realised we needed assistance with egg donation, they couldn't get rid of us quick enough. Many clinics stated that they didn't want anything to do with egg donation, as it was way too difficult and uneconomic compared to sperm donation. One clinic went as far as saying they preferred that this 'marketplace' (as they called it) stayed 'underground' and donors and recipients just turned up for the medical procedures. We were astonished at this unprofessional conduct and discriminatory behaviour.

We then decided to look overseas and were relieved to find more supportive legislation and an enlightened group of fertility clinics. The legislation permitted egg donors to receive payment as well as giving altruistically. The clinics encompassed multi-disciplinarian teams of specialists (eg. medical doctors, nurses, embryologists, clinical coordinators, naturopaths, acupuncturists, psychologists, etc) who offered professional support in the egg donation process and fertility treatment. Not surprisingly, we went to an overseas clinic to undergo the donor conception process and are happy to report that we have two healthy babies and are staying in regular contact with our donor.

Our experience in Australia (NSW) was embarrassingly amateurish compared to the treatment we received overseas. We believe the legislation prohibiting payment for egg donors has produced the almost unethical situation here in Australia – of minimal support for the process (for both donor and recipient) beyond the basic medical procedures. This forces what should be a carefully supported psychological and medical practice into almost a black market.

We believe the donor conception experience in Australia could be made better if, on a national basis, egg donors are permitted to receive payment, and equally importantly the process supporting egg donation is managed through authorised fertility clinics and is tightly governed by legislation and meticulous industry protocols.

### **We propose the Senate promote legislation that:**

1. Permits egg donors to receive payment as well as giving altruistically;
2. Tightly regulates the egg donation process and its compliance – for functions such as advertising standards, donor and recipient pre-screening, medical and psychological support and services, issues of anonymity and disclosure, record keeping and safeguards, etc; and
3. Governs the creation and of industry protocols for procedures, operational and service quality benchmarks/standards, selection criteria, fee structures, etc.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our story and make proposals on making donor conception a better experience for those couples who are devastated by infertility.