

19th July, 2010



To the Senate Inquiry into the Past & Present Practices of Donor Conception in Australia,

My child has three special people who gave her life – her mum, her dad and her egg donor. Each of these people make a significant contribution to who she is now and the adult she will become in the future. It is widely acknowledged that genetic and environmental influences largely determine the development of “the self” while documents such as the International Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Australia is a signatory, acknowledge the very human need for identity formation based on biological understanding.

As a citizen of Queensland and the larger community of Australia, my daughter is currently unprotected by laws which would preserve her basic human right to biological information. At times it has been suggested that information regarding her biological connections would be “lost” should it be sought. Such a statement is of deep concern to me.

As a parent of a donor conceived child I feel that all donor conceived people should have access to information about their donor no matter which state or territory of Australia they were born in and no matter when they were born. I believe that the inequality perpetrated by differing state laws should be ended. I further believe that donor information should be regularly updated, especially in relation to medical history.

In the current situation donor conceived people are the only group of people in Australia who have information about their biological parentage deliberately kept from them by organisations and governments.

The denial of this information can be psychologically harmful to donor conceived people. It may also be detrimental to their physical wellbeing by preventing them from having a full family medical history. As a society we have acknowledged these issues through legislation related to groups such as adoptees and it is time that the needs of donor conceived people were similarly acknowledged.

I ask that the Committee recommends that the Federal Government enacts legislation to give all Australian Donor Conceived People the right to have access to all available information on their donors.

The information I have received on behalf of my daughter has been at the discretion of her donor in response to a specific request and is dependent upon goodwill. Whilst it has satisfied her current need for information, her needs are likely to change over time. As a parent striving to meet my child's needs, I understand that only legislation can ensure continuity of access to information for my family and for the many other Australian families meeting the challenge of parenting donor conceived children.

I feel that the most positive outcome for all parties in the donor conception partnership will be achieved through the provision of appropriate and on-going counselling and support services, that the number of families who are connected by shared, donated genetic material should be strictly limited with each family to receive updates regarding the number of offspring, their gender and location. Ideally, donors, offspring and half-siblings should be able to contact each other should they desire to do so. Further, I believe that the payment of donors is inappropriate. It is undesirable that eggs, sperm and embryos which are potential human beings should form the basis of commercial contracts.

Yours faithfully,