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Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into Donor Conception in Australia

I respond to the invitation to provide a submission to the Inquiry and offer the following comments in relation to the Terms of Reference. My remarks reflect the concerns of one of my constituents who I have supported over a number of years in his quest for information on his parentage.

(a) Donor conception regulation and legislation across federal and state jurisdictions

I contend that in such fundamental areas relating to human reproduction, children's rights and the emotional stress surrounding these issues, legislation and regulation should be consistent across federal and state jurisdictions.

(b) The conduct of clinics and medical services, including:

(i) Payment for donors

Citing the example of organ donors, I believe that donors of sperm and ova should not be paid.

Research indicates that sperm donors who are not paid are generally older 'family men' who donate for altruistic reasons and who have a commitment to disclosure and openness.

(ii) Management of data relating to donor conception

My constituent has advised that all records relating to his conception have been destroyed. His distress at being unable to locate information about his donor provides a powerful case for accurate, enduring data management.

(iii) Provision of appropriate counselling and support services

I would advocate for appropriate services to support donor offspring where they feel the need for such assistance.

(d) The rights of donor conceived individuals

A fundamental concern for many donor offspring is their ability to access data on their genetic history. Regrettably, in the early years of this procedure, donors were guaranteed anonymity and record-keeping was frequently inadequate.

Although the South Australian Government allowed offspring to access non-identifying information in 1988, in my constituent's case, all records relating to his conception had been destroyed when he tried to retrieve the information in 1996.

Accordingly, the concerns of my constituent and many donor conceived individuals relate to:

- Establishing voluntary registers for both donors and offspring to assist offspring in locating historical information on their conception and any consequential issues;
- Knowledge of any potential for genetically inherited diseases;
- Apprehension about the possibility of consanguinity in adult sexual relationships. Although donors are now restricted to a limited number of families, in earlier years this was not the case and multiple children may have been born of the same donor. These adults may then meet without knowing their common genetic links; even more likely in a city the size of Adelaide.
- The right and need to know 'where one comes from'. My constituent argues that this is a basic human right important to a person's welfare. As adopted children were given the right retrospectively to access identifying information on their birth parents, this same right should be extended to children born from donor conception.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Bob Such MP JP
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