

I make my submission to this senate inquiry in my capacity as a mother to 3 precious boys conceived with the assistance of donor sperm.

The process involving the use of this donation, begun in 2002, was fraught with desperation and naivete on my part, and inconsistencies, thoughtlessness and opportunism on the part of the clinic.

My eldest son is 7 and it is now that the gravity of his conception and the void in his growing sense of identity is becoming apparent. I am trying to gather information for him and his brothers and just hit brick walls. My greatest concern, and that which I would request this inquiry to make it's top priority, is the recognition of the rights of all donor conceived people irregardless of when they were born.

When I was first offered donor sperm there was no option other than 'anonymous'. I had and still have no idea if my donor was counselled that there were different options for him, or what the consequences of his decision would be, or if he could change his mind later on. I was never informed about existing siblings, or a family limit and wonder whether he was informed either. I received no counselling that might have suggested I even ask these questions.

I have since requested an unidentifying letter be forwarded to him, and also to any siblings wishing to make contact. Neither of which happened. The whole process within the clinic is opaque and as there is no register federally or in Qld, there is no recourse for us.

As there is no federal legislation to ensure data about donors is kept and managed appropriately, clinics are under no obligation to care about the mental and physical health of my children. Their responsibility ended when I paid the last medical bill.

I would ask this committee to recommend legislation forcing clinics to maintain ALL information and ensure it is up to date. Donors should be contacted regularly, to ensure contact details are current. Apart from their obvious moral obligation, it should be part of their compliance to operate. They make people, not babies!

There should also be a National Register for donors, offspring and siblings.

I cannot stress enough the need for this legislation to be RETROSPECTIVE. To exclude one part of the population by choosing an arbitrary date is unfair and unjust. "Anonymous" vs "ID -release" are just meaningless to young adults piecing together their identity. Controlling access to information and negotiating contact between donors, offspring and other family members can be done with sensitivity, and respect for privacy. This has been shown to be true by our experiences with State adoption registers and the Jigsaw organisations. We must learn from the experience of adoption, we ignore this precedent at our peril!

I have read many of the other submissions to this inquiry. I am saddened by the plights of others and frightened that this will be the future for my children. I am also heartened to see such understanding of the dilemma and conflicts facing donor-conceived children and adults, and I hope that you as our Senate representatives also learn this understanding through this inquiry.

I am especially impressed with the recommendations made by Lauren Burns. We can learn much from her experience, tenacity and intelligence. She has put so eloquently what I would wish for my children. Please consider her recommendations with utmost seriousness.

Thank you.