

To the Committee Secretary,

My name is Zoe Brillante and I had a beautiful baby girl 18 months ago from a donor who will be able to be known to my daughter when she reaches 18. The donor is someone we have never met from the United States and the sperm was imported to Fertility First in Hurstville NSW.

Our first experience with donor conception was excellent. We selected our donor from a list of ten options available at the clinic. It would have been nice to have more options, but we were satisfied with our choice. I was lucky enough to conceive on the first go and we were blessed with a fabulous baby girl in late December of 2008.

My partner Linda and I knew we wanted to have more children and we really wanted them to be siblings as we think it will be important for them. We thought that we would be able to have as many siblings for our daughter as we chose.

In November 2009 we were very surprised to get a call from our fertility clinic Fertility First telling us that if my partner wanted to use the same donor as me for a child she would have to have an IVF cycle before the end of the year or else she would not be able to use the same donor as I did. This put undue pressure on us both emotionally and financially.

As of the first of January in 2010 the definition of how many people were allowed to use the same donor in Australia would be changing to to classify by how many women rather than by how many families. For the life of me I can't see any reasonable reason for this change in legislation which would only affect lesbians. It seems very homophobic.

In any case we absolutely didn't want to miss the opportunity to have children with a common donor so Linda rushed into an IVF treatment so that she could get some eggs fertilized and frozen... even though we had no intention of getting pregnant immediately. As Linda experienced a life threatening illness called Hyper Ovarian Stimulation as a result of this treatment and spent 10 days in hospital hooked up to all sorts of machines and was lucky to survive. Meanwhile due to the global financial crisis and the fact that we run our own businesses we struggled with a large financial stress as a result of this change to legislation as well. Clearly the timing was not right, and it was not timing that we chose.

We did manage to get some of Lindas eggs fertilized and frozen. Now we are faced with the prospect that we must use these eggs within the next five years rather than the usual 10 years given to women. We also have some of our donor's sperm which we have already purchased and paid to have stored. The new legislation also stipulates that we must use all the frozen sperm within three years. This sperm is expensive and it is something which we have purchased to invest in our family. Now we are told that there is a short time limit in which we must use it or lose it. This is totally unfair.

Not only that but we are now informed that we may not be able to get any more sperm from our donor as he is not registered on the new registry. What if the embryos and sperm we have are not enough to make our family? Sometimes it can take a lot of effort to conceive. Then our children will not get the opportunity to have real siblings. It just isn't fair at all. I don't think this legislation is helping anyone and it just seems to get worse and worse.

Just to sweeten things further Medicare has removed our safety net for IVF/insemination treatments so the costs for everything have skyrocketed.

So, as you can see I'm not very pleased with the way things have progressed on the legislation side. I am very delighted with my baby girl and want nothing more to create some fabulous sisters and brothers for her and I am committed to making this work somehow.

Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,
Zoe Brillante