

My wife and I have two children that were conceived using donor conception.

Our daughter is 15 yrs old and our son 12. We have been very open and honest with them about their origins – or as open as we can based on the sketchy information we have of their donor.

The decision to have children through donor conception was obviously ours but we don't have to deal with the reality of being a child who was conceived this way. Our children do. As our family have grown and matured so too have our views in relation donor anonymity.

We now feel that it is our children's rite to know more about their paternal family roots, not necessarily about the individual donor but that would be a bonus. Questions such as their paternal nationality are important as they develop their own sense of identity. Was he of Irish, Yugoslavian, French or Scottish heritage. We are all from somewhere else.

My wife Donna and I weren't fully aware of the consequences of our decision to have children this way. We were young, in love and desperate for a family. Our children are beautiful, well balanced and accept things as they are but they also have a part of them that is missing. There must be a greyness to their sense of identity that would be unsettling. We had our prayers answered with two beautiful children – we weren't aware of the subtleties of this decision or the impact on our children in the future.

We respect the rite of the donor to remain anonymous but feel that our children have a rite to be able to attempt to make contact with him. If he is willing to make contact great – if he is not – there are other ways he can give our children some information on their genealogy – without identifying himself.

We also think that paying donors is a good idea and also screening the “strong” from the “weak” applicants. Because this is an anonymous system it is not prejudicial to favour some applicants over others. The system should do this. The donor's good looks, intelligence and physical health are not something that parents need, or should be allowed to affect their decision when choosing a donor. It may not be said out loud by anyone for fear of being politically incorrect or even worse encouraging selective breeding. However, deep down it is something that every prospective couple think about.

Donors shouldn't be accepted in an ad-hoc way. Family health history, their own health and some difficult to quantify issues such as intelligence, appearance and personality should be taken into account. Every parent wants a healthy happy child to be able to grow and develop in a normal way into a well balanced individual. We can improve the chances of this happening by establishing some broad selection criteria for prospective donors.

This is a unique opportunity to fix a broken system. The donor conception industry has evolved and developed with some well meaning but inflexible legislation that has not kept pace with the changing face of Australia. The authoritarian approach to child rearing that was the norm in the 1950's has no place in the new millennium. Children today are treated with respect and they respond to that. Children today feel that have a rite to information and find it difficult to understand when that information is denied to them. This is especially so when it relates to their identity. As a couple we didn't understand

that when we made the decision to use a donor dad. As a society we have matured and we need to develop legislation that reflects the society we live in and will live in.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues with you if the opportunity arose.

Regards

L&D Galvin