

Submission
No 20

INQUIRY INTO INCLUSION OF DONOR DETAILS ON THE REGISTER OF BIRTHS

Name: Name Suppressed
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Partially Confidential

Submission to the Inquiry for Inclusion of donor details on the register of births

I make this submission as a mother of a child conceived using donor eggs.

As there are no terms of reference for this inquiry it is difficult to know the extent to which the details are required.

I do not think it would be fair to include details of a donor by the register of births, when the Department of Health register would be maintained. By having to record these details with the register of births, it raises an issue as to whether these details would then be disclosed on the child's birth certificate.

I consider it would be discriminatory to include these details as it immediately marks the child as different. Whilst our child will know he was conceived with the assistance of a donor, we consider that this is *his* information to share with people when he is older, not ours. By requiring these details to be disclosed by the register of births, it would immediately open the possibilities of third parties finding out he was donor conceived.

If these details are to be included on a birth certificate then any school, doctor, bank, passport office, sporting team etc would discover our child is donor conceived when in reality it has no bearing on who he is. It is almost like asking people to disclose how they conceived their child (eg what sexual position was used and whether they were planned or not), which quite frankly no one is particularly interested in. Recipients of donor organs are not required to disclose who their donor is, so why should a child conceived with the assistance of one single donated cell (egg or sperm) be required to disclose who their donor is (or the fact that they are donor conceived) on their birth certificate.

Many people do not understand donor conception. By requiring donor conceived children to have further details recorded about them, it is further stigmatising them from the moment they are born, when really they deserve to be treated like every other child. The fact that a child is donor conceived is only really an issue in respect of genetic issues.

By requiring these details to be included on the register for births, any donor conceived child will lose their right to privacy as to the fact they were conceived with the assistance of a donor. Whether or not donor sperm, eggs or embryos were required to create a child has absolutely no bearing on who the child is. It does not affect their personality, their interests or any other aspect about them. By requiring these details to be maintained by the register of births it will immediately provide information about the child to third parties that may cause people to have a different view of them (due to the fact that donor conception is really not understood or accepted in Australia).

Donors are hard to find at present, and the inclusion of their details on the register of births is likely to further discourage donations. Whilst most clinics encourage known donation, there are others that prefer to keep the people anonymous and some donors only donate through these clinics as they do not want any sort of relationship with either the family or any resulting children. The register kept by the Department of Health should be sufficient to enable any children to discover basic details about their donor and genetic history.

The reason for the need for donated embryos, eggs and sperm can be quite varied. Whilst a donor is most commonly associated with same sex relationships or older women, there are many medical reasons why people need a donor, including cancer and early menopause. We have had to go through many hardships to have a child, including finding a donor, the IVF process, miscarriages and of course expense. It seems that with every advance in technology, governments are keen to include further barriers to people who are desperate to have a child. The inclusion of donor details by the register of births will be seen as yet another barrier or hurdle for people to overcome, as there is quite likely a significant number of altruistic donors who would not like their details to be disclosed in such a way.

If donor details are going to be included on birth certificates it raises an issue as to what status donors may have. A donor is not considered a parent, yet inclusion of their details on a birth certificate may raise any issue as to whether they are something more than just a donor of a single cell. The government should just stay out of these issues. As no legal rights attach to the donor, it is questionable as to what the purpose of the details being included in the register of births would be. The donor has no claim on the child, and the child (or its parents) cannot claim any parental responsibility from the donor (including child support). Given that the details of the donor are recorded by the Department of Health and that this register is proposed to be maintained, there appears to be nothing to be gained by further inclusion of donor details by the register of births.

I am strongly opposed to any such inclusion of details, and know my opposition is supported by a significant number of women whose children are also donor conceived.

If the government is to proceed with allowing the details of donors to be recorded on the register of births, then it should be a voluntary thing, and not compulsory.