

**Submission
No 14**

**INQUIRY INTO INCLUSION OF DONOR DETAILS ON
THE REGISTER OF BIRTHS**

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Submission to the Inquiry into Whether There Should Be Provision for the Inclusion of Donor Details on the Register of Births Maintained by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

I welcome this Inquiry into a long overdue review of the prevailing practice of allowing the birth certificates of donor conceived people to misrepresent the biological truth of their origins.

A donor conceived person is entitled, according to Mr Justice Scott-Baker, ruling in a UK High Court Case, "*to establish a picture of his identity as much as anyone else.*" Donor conceived people deserve to have the dignity of the truth about themselves recorded and made available to them in order to explore their full identity, their kinship network and their family medical history. Access to a truthful birth certificate is both a human rights issue and one of discrimination against a small but growing group of people. I support the proposed inclusion of gamete donor details on the register of births maintained by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages in order that such information may become available to those who are donor conceived.

When in adulthood I had concerns about my paternity I purchased a full copy of my birth certificate, which stated that my "Father" was the man married to my mother at the time of my birth and the person I had been brought up to believe was my biological male parent. The certificate carried the rather ominous words, "*It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.*" I had no way of knowing from reading the certificate that I was donor conceived.

The person most prejudiced by the deliberate lie about my paternity was undoubtedly me. I could easily have been lulled into a false sense of security about my true identity by a certificate which people in general assume to be an honest representation of the true facts. Luckily I remained skeptical. When given the opportunity to take part in groundbreaking medical research aimed at the families of people whose parents had been afflicted by diabetes, of which my "Father" had died, my input into an early DNA exploration project could have had a damaging effect and badly skewed the results, which went on to show that diabetes has a strong genetic component which can be inherited from one generation to another. This personal illustration shows that the consequences of government endorsed identity deception can have implications for wider society as well as for the duped individual.

The current system for recording donor information has not been beneficial to those who are donor conceived and I would support a move for the details of donor conception to be kept by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The current system of birth registration allows privacy for parents affected by male infertility and allows equal parenting rights to both of the adults named as parents on the birth certificate, but I do not believe that their sensitivities should take precedence over the truth, or over the best long term interests of the person they have created. Parents should not have an option that allows them to permanently deceive their donor conceived children, but many will continue to be evasive under the proposed change unless there is a penalty for non-compliance.

I do hope that the committee will be brave enough to break with long held tradition and bring about a beneficial change in the way that donor conceived people have their origins recorded by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages so that their identity rights can be honoured and they will have the chance of acquiring the benefit of being able to explore their full genetic origins.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Whipp

