**Submission
No 16**

MANAGING INFORMATION RELATED TO DONOR CONCEPTION

Name: name suppressed

Date Received: 14/02/2013

[redacted]

12th February 2013

Inquiry into Managing Information Related to Donor Conception

Submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety

Recommendations

1) All records relating to donor conception (details of genetic parentage) be located, centralised and given protective status.

2) Specialised donor linking services should be set up for any person who requires the service. It should act independently from any fertility clinics. Counsellors experienced in this area should provide support before, during and post release of information to any party concerned (donor conceived person, donor, families etc).

3) All persons, regardless of when they were born should be allowed to apply for and access the records relating to their conception, including identifying details about their genetic parents upon reaching 18 years of age. This should be allowed earlier with parental consent. These details should only be released once both parties (donor conceived person and donor) have had counselling through the donor linking service

4) In the case where the donor does not wish to have contact, they should be allowed to place a contact veto only; once an application for their details has been made, and following a session with the donor linking counsellor.

5) Donor linking services should also act as intermediaries to facilitate contact with half siblings.

Donor Conceived Adult Perspective

Donor conception affects me personally, along with thousands of other Australians. My Mum and Dad conceived me in 1983 with genetic material from a man I know only by a donor code (my biological Father). I have a donor conceived sister and brother, and 4 half siblings (I know basically nothing about).

To be completely honest, for me, not having knowledge and access to part of my own identity and medical history is confusing, upsetting and distressing. When asked questions about my background or medical history, I don't have the answers. I look at myself in the mirror and wonder. I look at people in the street and wonder. I worry about unknown genetic medical conditions. This affects not only myself, but my children also. It is so disempowering to have no rights to fully know who I am and where I come from. I have no way of knowing my history, or passing this on to my family.

Equal Rights for Donor Conceived People

Donor conceived people are currently being discriminated against based on; how they were conceived, what year they were conceived, where they were conceived and where they were born. Everyone has the same basic need to know about family history. The current system has created different classes of donor conceived people with differing rights, based on arbitrary factors beyond their control. This is plain discrimination, and a matter which needs prompt rectification.

All donor conceived people should have equal rights to access identifying information about their genetic parents, regardless of the circumstances surrounding their conception. I believe the only way to restore equality is to allow for retrospective access to information about genetic parents.

Accessing Information

Donor conceived people did not get a say in how they were conceived, and whether they wished to be disconnected from their genetic families, and thus lose part of their heritage. The only way to start to restore their identity is to allow them the right to know who they are.

I realise this is a very sensitive matter which needs to protect the rights of all parties. Counselling must be provided to all concerned upon the release of information. If one party requests contact, it needs to be mutually agreed upon by both the donor conceived person and their biological (donor) parent(s). The request for contact should be facilitated by an independent, experienced donor linking counselling service who would act as an intermediary.

In the case where contact is not mutually desired, this should not prohibit the donor conceived person access to information about their familial heritage. The donor conceived person still has a right to know their origins. However, both donor conceived person and donor have the right to decline contact with each other. The wishes for non-contact must be adhered to.

Donor Records

Donor records all need to be located, centralise and given protective status. This needs to be done immediately, as at this point, the records containing information regarding DC people's origins can be destroyed at any moment. This is cause for much anxiety and distress to many DC people. These records hold the only link to DC people's genetic history.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission, I hope it provides some assistance in shaping the way forward on this very important issue.

[redacted]

[redacted]