

INQUIRY INTO INCLUSION OF DONOR DETAILS ON THE REGISTER OF BIRTHS

Organisation: VANISH Inc
Name: Ms Coleen Clare
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Submission - 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

This is a submission by VANISH - a Victorian based search and support organisation which provides assistance to relieve the suffering of people who have experienced separation from family of origin through adoption or donor-conception. Further information about VANISH is available here <http://www.vanish.org.au/>

VANISH advocates strongly for access by donor conceived individuals to information about their biological heritage. We argue that donor conceived people should, as of right, have access to the identity of their biological parents (that is including their egg or sperm donor). Knowledge of identity is a basic human right. VANISH argues for changes to legislation and practice which will enable donor conceived children to have access, as of right, to information about their biological parentage. In advocating this position VANISH points to the precedent of changes to policy and practice in the case of adoption – which changes have enabled access by adopted people to information in the same manner as we now advocate for the donor conceived.

Specifically with regard to the Committee's Inquiry, VANISH supports action which will ensure that the details of sperm or egg donors are recorded on Registries of Births. Doing so will ensure that information about genetic parentage will be available to people who are conceived with donor gametes.

The Committee will be aware that policy and practice in this regard has recently been changed in Victoria. We submit that the current Victorian practice provides both a precedent and a model which the NSW Parliament could follow. The introduction of the current Victorian practice came about as a result of consideration of this matter by the Victorian Parliament – including Inquiries into matters of access by donor conceived people to information about their genetic heritage.

The key elements of the current Victorian practice with regard to birth registration of donor conceived children are as follows:

- In the case of a child being conceived with donor gametes, the Registry of Births is marked with the words "donor conceived" against the entry of the child's birth in the Register.
- Information regarding the donor (biological parent) is recorded in the Register.
- If and when the donor conceived person applies for a birth certificate after reaching 18 years of age the Registrar attaches an addendum to the certificate stating that further information (that is the information about the donor) is available about that birth registration.

PO Box 112
Carlton South 3053

P (03) 9328 8611
F (03) 9329 1752
E1 info@vanish.org.au
W www.vanish.org.au

3rd Floor 100 Franklin Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

A donor conceived person is thus, when they reach the age of 18 and if and when they apply for a birth certificate, alerted to their having been donor conceived and is able to obtain information regarding the identity of their donor/biological parent if and when they chose to do so once

VANISH strongly argues for the adoption of a similar policy and practice in NSW.

We would be happy to provide further information in support of this submission if required.

Coleen Clare
Manager
VANISH Inc.

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