

Submission
No 17

**INQUIRY INTO LEGISLATION ON ALTRUISTIC
SURROGACY IN NSW**

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Submission regarding Legislation on altruistic surrogacy in NSW

I am writing concerning the Inquiry into legislation on altruistic surrogacy to be conducted by the NSW Legislative Council. As a psychologist with over twenty years of experience in dealing with young adults, I am very concerned that legislation may be proposed that will create enormous psychological and emotional difficulties for children born to surrogate parents.

It is my experience that while adults may think they 'know best' for the child with respect to surrogacy, they do not understand the powerful inbuilt desire of every young person to learn of his/her origins. I have counselled young people, in situations of adoption, fostering and wardship, and watched them undertake long and painful searches for parents who gave up their rights to them; despite making a good go of their lives in many cases, and loving their new adoptive or foster families, they still seek to know something of their origins. It seems so deeply implanted in a human person, no legislation can eliminate it.

My concern with the altruistic surrogacy legislation is that it confuses the boundaries of child and parent even further than already happens in the various situations of our society. The surrogate mother may sign a contract which she may initially agree with – but powerful feelings may take over 2, 3 or 10 years later causing difficult painful situations for the child and parent. And what about the child? If there are competing parents, mothers, fathers, and the wider families of both, how could the situation engender anything but anxiety, confusion and future pain for a child in this situation. What looks good on paper, or sounds good in discussion, does not necessarily work out for the good in real life. Why not take the path of caution? Why increase the chance of a child's suffering?

In a society where many children must live with the consequences of family breakdown especially their parents' divorce, we have a lot of research now on the difficult dynamics involved in blended families. As a psychologist, I have heard many children tell me what they think of such situations – and it is NOT what they tell their parents, NOT what they feel free enough to tell their parents. They tell me of their fragility, their sense of confusion in frequent changes and uncertain relationships, and this is in a situation where they know their biological parents as well as their step parents. Where you get a situation where a child is born in a situation of surrogacy, who is to say what psychological consequences there will be – and what possible further changes of family through divorce, separation and future changes of situation/parents, there may be. A child deserves to know who his/her biological mother and father is; he/she deserves a story, clarity, origins. You who are reading this know, what it means to know who your own parents are. And think, if indigenous children, surrogately conceived were adopted by a white Caucasian family, would they not want to know their origins, their roots – would they not feel stolen, or worse 'traded'? No altruism in that.

Please err on the side of caution. Do not be swept along with the utilitarian ideas underlying this proposed legislation, for the short term 'benefit' of surrogate and other parents. Please consider that the child has a life, a story, a right to belong, a right to be protected as much as possible from the tragic changes life can bring. On moral and psychological grounds this legislation should be rejected.

Wanda Skowronska
Psychologist .