

INQUIRY INTO MATTERS RELATING TO DONOR CONCEPTION INFORMATION

- the author's name ○ **Dr Antonietta Sanfilippo (Ferme)**
- submission is made on behalf of an organisation, the level of approval ○ **No**
- mailing address (and email if available) ○ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- daytime telephone number
○ [REDACTED]

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Dear Committee,

I write this submission as an adopted person, of 48 years of age, whom for decades has taken a keen interest in issues of IVF-Donor conceived – many of the issues for the adopted are also the same for IVF-Donor conceived persons.

Firstly, I'd like to express my opinion that in the next few decades an uprising of IVF-Donor conceived persons will likely occur (with respect to their rights), especially if the rights of IVF-Donor conceived are not acknowledged and addressed soon. I have seen more and more people involve themselves in the issues over time.

Secondly, many Govt Inquiries make a whole load of recommendations that are never effected/actioned. The recent VIC Inquiry into Forced Adoptions is an example – of many many recommendations (over 50) only x2 token actions were made by the government – this has ensued in a situation where many adopted feel more angry now than prior to the inquiry. Again, despite the government promoting that many of the recommendations were being addressed, the truth is only x2 have gone through (and one of these recommendation was not endorsed by many adopted – their grievances have escalated now). To conduct an Inquiry using tax-payer money, really does require concrete action to be taken to make it worthwhile and ethical.

○ **Presentation of issues:**

Secrecy and concealment of the truth. Many IVF-Donor conceived persons have not been told the truth about their identity and conception. Similarly, my own adoption was also kept a secret to me for close to x2 decades. This is heartless and appalling – yet the parents keep getting away with it. Actions need to be taken to remedy this: government intervention to check that the kids have been told by the time they are 5 years old; legal ramifications for parents who do not disclose the truth (ie changes in law, so that they can be charged and sued); and having the true parent (donor) on the birth certificate from day dot (birth).

I have read much research on late discovery of adoption/IVF/surrogacy/paternity fraud, and it has a VERY bad impact on the person, and can lead to life long problems in health and mental wellbeing, and relationships.

It is a **serious human rights violation** to withhold the truth from IVF-Donor conceived persons (ie that they were conceived via a donor). A plethora of research says that the earlier the disclosure, the better.

Birth certificates: The donor parent needs to be stated on the certificate at the time of birth. The infertile parent can be named as Social Parent (reflecting the true situation). **Birth certificates are a GENELOGICAL record.** IVF-Donor conceived persons and their future offspring have a right to access a true birth cert (and not a Fake one). Falsifying birth certificates should be completely abandoned – again, a birth cert is (or should be) a historical record of the true ancestry and heritage of the child. It also helps to alleviate lying, on the part of the parents, about the true situation (because the true facts are on the birth cert).

Some may say “but I don’t want my true situation on paper for others to see” – does this not tell a story of something not being quite right with IVF Donor conception per se? Why feel shame or other negative feelings about the truth being on paper, if there were nothing wrong with this social engineering in the first place?

Free Government funded Medical DNA Testing: All IVF-Donor conceived persons (and adopted) need this service. The reasons for this should be clear. Even those whom have contact with their donor, the medical information is not always forthcoming (also, generally there is not day to day contact with the donor and thus the “taken for granted” daily discussions families have about medical stuff are not reflected in the lives of IVF-Donor conceived /adopted persons). I say this from experience and talking to IVF-Donor conceived persons for decades.

The right to privacy of donors: a donor is actually the child’s parent. **Denying biology is a human rights violation of the child and their off-spring.** As highlighted by many IVFDonor conceived persons, the situation has become, and always has been, adult-centric. The rights of the child need to come well before the parents. Having been part of IVF Forums online for decades, undertaking informal research to understand how both donors and parents feel and think, I was appalled at what I found. There is a prevailing idea amongst some of them that “Donoring is just like donating an organ etc”. One man (looking at an IVF-Donor to conceive with his wife), whom I had a very thorough discussion with, outlined to me that during IVF counselling, he was told by the professional that it’s just “some cells that start the process” – this man had no idea of the importance of biology and heritage for his future child. I find this scary for the kids.

Having said all this – the privacy of donors needs to be limited. They need to accept 1) they are giving away their own flesh and blood and need to accept and embrace the likely possibility that this child may wish to be included in his/her family in the future. Some donors are saying they want nothing to do with their donated child – this is inhumane. These types of people should NOT be allowed to donate.

In fact, I go so far as to say that the processes need to change where 1) the donor includes the child in their own family from day dot – **depriving children of growing up without their true biological parent/siblings is cruel** 2) the donor fully understands and accepts that this IS their own flesh and blood, their own child that they are giving away to strangers, and that accordingly secrecy and privacy is not the best way forward. Donors should always be involved in the life of the child as early as possible. How will the parents going through IVF

feel? Not important is all I can say. This is **not** about the parents – **the rights of the child should come first.**

Infertile couples and adoptive parents often fear they may lose the child (ie the child will turn against them or not love/see them in the same way etc). This is a known fact. Why do they feel this way? Because they know instinctively that Biology and heritage is VERY important to most people. Yet, the heritage and biology of IVF-Donor conceived persons is constantly denied in some/many cases. Instead, we focus on the rights of the parents more so – this is wrong.

Terminology: “Donor Parent” is preferred (they ARE the child’s parent, this is undeniable).

Limiting the amount of donations made by any single donor parent. Follow the recommendations given by other submissions.

The issue of infertility. Having spent x5 years on many IVF sites (where infertile couples discussed the very intimate feelings they hold), all I saw there were desperate people whom could not accept their infertility and would go to any lengths to have a child. More importantly, most felt that **it’s their right to have children.** It’s not a Right at all, and basically infertility has always been around and it’s pot luck as to whether you can have a child or not. We need to re-vision infertility as normal.

My adoptive mother never recovered from the fact her and my dad were an infertile couple, and in a way that I describe as Pathological and Unhealthy. I’ve also had similar reports from IVF-Donor conceived persons. The infertile party/s need proper counselling that goes above what is currently available, to help with this. This indirectly promotes better outcomes for the IVF-Donor conceived persons.

DIY / Backyard / Cowboy Donors. This should be immediately outlawed, and once outlawed criminal charges placed on parties (both parents/donor) who continue to engage in this illegal activity. It won’t change unless it’s made illegal.

Media. Children born through IVF-Donor/surrogacy should not have their names, faces and identities placed in any media. Once the child is 18 years of age, they can then choose to have this revealed. Babies and children can not give proper consent to their very private details being spread all over the media.

Case Study. A person I know gave his sperm away to a lesbian couple. Please note I am Pro Gay/LGBTQ, and my sentiments also relate to Stright couples (no discrimination here). He was then completely locked out of the child’s life. The couple will not let him see the child at all. This seems totally ridiculous. The lesbian couple would be improving the child’s life by having a father and male figure of the child’s true origins. The laws need to change to give donor parents more rights, too.

I understand my words may be strong – unfortunately I fear for IVF-Donor conceived persons rights and also the rights of their off-spring. My concern also extends to adopted persons and those conceived through traditional surrogacy and similar.

Kind Regards,

Dr Toni Sanfilippo (Ferme).