

Sophie Hicks

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Inquiry Into Matters Relating To Donor Conception Information

My name is Sophie Hicks and I am a 21 year old donor conceived person. I was raised as an only child by a single Mother, who informed me at a very early age of my conception. I was conceived in NSW from an anonymous sperm donor who was obtained from [REDACTED] clinic. Although I feel very fortunate to have a parent who wanted me so badly, I cannot begin to express the profound impact my conception has had on my life.

In April of 2021, after years of searching, I discovered 5 of my siblings via an informal channel. This discovery was incredible for me, as I had always wanted siblings. It was the same day I also learned that my donor was actually obtained from [REDACTED]. This was quite a shock to me as there was no note of this on his donor profile, other than a 'Q' placed in front of his original donor code.

I then decided to contact [REDACTED] clinic, hoping they would hold records about my donor and siblings, as his anonymous profile was the only piece of information about him that was submitted to my clinic in NSW. When I first contacted them, I was informed I would need to obtain my Mothers consent to access any information at all. This was incredibly frustrating as these records are about me and my paternal family and had nothing to do with her. Luckily she was happy to provide me with her consent and this was not an issue.

The clinic then sent me an email with my donor's anonymous profile and a list of all my siblings. After reading the email, I began to question the accuracy of the amount of siblings they were now telling me I had. The mother of three of my siblings had previously forwarded an email from the director of the clinic stating there were 15 children with 10 recipient families, and I was now being told that there are 11 children with 7 recipient families. When I confronted them about this, they said they had "no idea" where this original number came from. I found this to be incredibly negligent, but they tried to assure me that this was definitely the correct number. I also noticed in the email that one of my siblings had been incorrectly listed as a boy, when I corrected them about this, they admitted the mistake. This only added to my worry. I also asked if I could be provided a list of all the clinics they sent his sperm to, I was then told they would be unable to do this due to privacy.

A few months later, after speaking with other families who had inaccurate information provided to them by this clinic. I decided to recontact just to confirm what they had previously told me and ask them to contact the donor, as per the guidelines. In this email they admitted to me that there were a further 2 recipient families and due to incompetence, they could only confirm the births of these child but nothing about them (year/month of birth, how many and sex). Now bringing my sibling count to 13+ with 9

families. I was also readily provided with a list of clinics his sperm was sent to, after being denied to me before. I then queried with them a set of twin siblings I have, born after the 2004 guideline change, which states all children with no other siblings born before 2004 are to be conceived with an identifiable donor. According to the list, they don't have any other siblings from the same family. They were unable to explain how this happened, but admitted mistakes were made in the past, but they tried to assure me their business is highly regulated now.

I then asked them to contact the donor, and ask for an identity release, as per the current guidelines. They outright refused to do this and said he does not want to be contacted. I questioned the accuracy of this. According to an email sent to the mother of 3 of my siblings in 2017, they attempted to make contact with him as per her request, but according to them his contact details had changed and they were unable to reach him. Despite the guidelines stating the clinic is to maintain acute contact details.

I have found this entire process to be incredibly challenging and heartbreaking. Because of an unregulated state and an incompetent clinic, I may never truly know the amount of siblings I have, or have a way to reach them and the donor. I wake up everyday feeling as if I have been robbed of a relationship with all of them, as because of my conception, something I have no control over. The majority of the population does not have to walk down the street and wonder if they are related to anyone. I cannot see why donor conceived people are less worthy than anyone else to know the names of their biological parents and siblings.

After reading my story above could you please consider the following requests:

- Legislation in Queensland to ensure clinics maintain their ethics.
- Enact a register, to ensure donor conceived people receive accurate records and have a way to contact newly found relatives
- Release the identities of donors to all donor conceived people regardless of when they were born.
- Release the identities of the siblings to all donor conceived people.

I would like to stress how important the things I have listed above are to me and my wellbeing. I'm not out to interrupt anyone's life. Identity and contact are two very different things.

Thank you for your time,

Sophie Hicks