



28th of April 2022

Re: Inquiry Into Matters Relating to Donor Conception Information

I request that my name and other identifying information is withheld. This information not only relates to me but my sisters so, not everyone we interact with knows that we are donor conceived and I would like that information to be theirs to choose to disclose or not.

I was born in December 1980 via sperm donation conception. I have 2 younger sisters that were also conceived this way. My social father who raised me and I loved with all of my heart was unable to conceive children. I did not know this until I was getting married in 2004 and his family threatened to expose this “secret” at my wedding. It calls into question the motivations of his family but that aside, my sisters and I did not know this until this time. We were only informed so that we would not be surprised if the extended family did follow through on their threat.

My sisters and I look very different, have very different interests and skills. The parentage of one of the three of us was the subject of much speculation due to these differences. We just always accepted that this is what it was. We all reacted to the revelation that we were donor conceived differently. I had a very close relationship with my Dad until he passed away 3 years ago. All the same I have wondered who this other person was and who else might I be related to. I was not lacking in a loving family but I still always wondered what if...

I told my close friends and relevant family at the time. I did not keep this as open information as my Dad was not keen to reveal this secret. My parents had never intended to tell me. The Doctors who assisted in the donor conception told them not to tell us. He thought we may love him less. He would never have understood my yearning to know more about who I am.

All my parents knew was that the donors were medical students. I wanted to be a doctor growing up. I wanted to help people, I did not want to be left with a laboratory job, I wanted to work with people. I chose an undergraduate degree that gave me an option if I did not go to med school. I remember asking my parents, “Didn’t you think it was strange I wanted to be a doctor and my biological father was/is a doctor?” I think that was what made me wonder what part of “me” is from this unknown seemingly never to be known person.

My sisters were more matter of fact and did not have an interest in finding out more. I tried to find out more information but in the early 2000's even finding out family tree information about your known family was nearly impossible. I went to counseling, I spoke to my GP and they all told me it was anonymous and nothing could be done. Over the years I would google here and there to see if there were any changes for donor conceived people and their rights. I was interested to find out that things had progressed in NSW and VIC but nothing in QLD where I was conceived.

I still live close to the area that we grew up in. Over the years I have seen many, I mean multiple people that physically resemble my youngest sister. Sometimes I will be at the shops and have to look twice to check it was not my sister walking past. She has distinctive features that I have not seen in many other people. Late last year I saw another person who gave me this almost *deja vu* feeling. I asked my sisters if they had come across this. They both said yes they had seen people that reminded them of our youngest sister but not me or my middle sister. I decided to do some online research again, to see what information had been made available in the 10-15 years since I last looked into it.. I was concerned that like in other countries there were donors that intentionally donated lots or it was a dodgy doctor.

This time I was able to find a "We are donor conceived" Facebook page for Australians. Fortunately not any revelations about the treating QLD doctors being accused of unethical or unlawful practices..

In this group I was for the first time able to connect with like-minded people. Even though my sisters were in the same situation they did not feel the same but I found people who completely understood me. I also found someone who looked like my sister. My sisters and I took Ancestry DNA tests, which I had also only just found out were even possible. Before we got the results back I had found who I was quite confident was my sisters donor siblings and father.

My youngest sister is devoted to animals, I describe her as liking animals more than people. She is smart but also laid back and is very connected to nature. None of this relates to my family growing up in suburban Brisbane, we just know it is very much her identity. I connected with someone who may have been her sister (with my sister's permission) and she said she also liked animals more than people. She shared a photo (again with permission) of the donor conceived people and their donor father. In this photo saw my sister's *doppelganger*. Not just one, but multiple. Her expressions, her face, the way he held his head was all her. We did get the results back that confirmed by assumptions that my sister's donor family was indeed who we thought. This man donated for many years while he was a Veterinary student. The love of animals and nature, the huge part of her identity came from a man that she has never met. There are over 15 known offspring from this single donor. I am not clear on the specifics but he donated frequently over many years. My sister has even since found out that she met a half sibling while she was studying animal health at university. How scary is that. With such a large amount of offspring in a localised area then it is not beyond the realms of possibility that siblings could end up in an online or real-world relationship.

My other sister was the first to complete an ancestry DNA test. She has different facial features than the rest of us. She is often asked about her heritage and she does not know how to respond. She was able to find these answers. She has not had a biological father match but she did find 2 half sisters.

So, in a cruel twist of fate my sisters, who were not interested in finding their family, now have found at least parts of their other family. I still have not. I am told that records are not available, they were destroyed or lost in a flood or fire etc, you get the idea. These men were told that they were anonymous and would not be found. I understand that young men probably did not think through to what would be the reality of their donations down the track. They could not have predicted at this time that the human genome would be sequenced and genetic testing would readily accessible. That the internet would connect people from all over the world.

I have no interest in any financial gain etc from a biological father. I want to see someone that I can see myself in. I want to see how much of me really is from a stranger. I mostly want to know if I have any other siblings out there and satisfy my curiosity. I want to know any relevant medical information that may be valuable to me and my own children. My children cannot accurately state if they have a family history of any illnesses or cancer because this information is hidden from me as a donor conceived person.

I am not looking to replace a relationship that I had with my Dad. Nothing can do that. But the idea that genetic material does not make you who you are is false. Nurture has a big part no doubt but from personal experience you can down play the significance of nature.

I am concerned for the young people today both those conceived via donors as well as donors themselves. More regulation is needed. As I have shared my story with others in recent years, I found out that even not 10 years ago (early 2010s) men were being scouted at Universities on the Gold Coast with the promise of easy cash and anonymity. The idea that even 10 years ago that you could remain anonymous is insane. The technological advances that were inconceivable to my donor and doctors is commonplace reality today.

Donor conceived people have the right to know their family both social and genetic. They need to know sooner, not later. If I had always known the truth of my conception, I would not have loved my Dad any less. I would have been saved from significant trauma in my early adult life as the facts would have always been known to me. Even better to have known and had the opportunity to meet my relatives. Even now the clock is ticking. If action is taken and I can get some assistance to find out if there is any information about the donor etc I may get the opportunity to meet my family. There are grandparents that I may never meet. The opportunity to meet half of my family is closing as they age. Even if we do connect there will always be the lost years.

I implore you to help so many Queenslanders to know their past, their present and to know themselves. I want legislation to give donor conceived people rights. This needs to be retroactive. Assurances can be made against a financial liability for these connections.

The fertility industry needs tighter regulations with very defined limits on how many children be conceived from one donor.

Donor conceived people should ALWAYS have access to this information, not when they are 18, but from birth.

Registers should be made and retrospective information found.

Thank you for your consideration. Donor conception NEEDS to focus on the rights of donor conceived people, not the needs or wants of parents, donors or doctors. Don't focus on them - focus on US. Don't let Queensland be the state that is behind the times and stuck in the past.

Thank you for your time and consideration
Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.