



The Voluntary Register

Creating opportunities to exchange information

Infertility Treatment Authority

In the past it was often difficult, if not impossible, for children born with the help of donated sperm, eggs or embryos to get information about their biological heritage. There was a widely held view that the offspring were better off not knowing.

Today we know that many beneficiaries of donor procedures wish to have the opportunity to find out about the donors, and that many donors also wish to know about the offspring created with the assistance of their donation.

Since 1988, the Victorian government has recognised that individuals born with the assistance of donor procedures have a right to information that will help them trace their biological origins. Donors consent to providing information at the time of their donation. This information is kept in the Central Registers.

However this does not help individuals born with the assistance of anonymous donations made before 1988.

The Voluntary Registers have been created to:

- Help those people involved before 1988 to find information
- To facilitate a voluntary exchange of information for those people involved with treatment since 1988

The registers are called the Pre-1988 and the Post-1988 Voluntary Register.

People who can use the Voluntary Register include:

- people born as a result of donor treatment procedures;

- descendants of offspring of donor treatment procedures;
- couples who have had a child through these procedures;
- donors who have provided sperm, eggs or embryos;
- relatives of any of the groups of people described above;
- people who wish to establish whether they were born as a result of a donor treatment procedure; and
- biological siblings of offspring of donor procedures.

Information from the Voluntary Register will only be provided in line with the instructions given by the applicants to the Register.

How can I join the Voluntary Register?

You can join the Voluntary Register by completing an application form. The forms are available at www.ita.org.au or by phone or post. There are different forms for recipients, parents, donors and siblings and for pre-1988 or post-1988 procedures. As well as your details, you will be asked how any match or requests for information should be handled. For example: you may only want us to give access to information that does not identify you; or you may want us to provide contact information that will allow you to meet. Different forms are used for pre-1988 and post-1988 procedures.

The donor code is the key piece of information that allows the Authority to link the names of recipients and donors. If you don't have a donor code we will make every effort to identify it either from:

- the Central Registers that have been established since July 1988, or
- the records that were kept by the treating clinic or doctor prior to 1988.

If you are under 18 years old then your request must be made by your parents.

What will happen if a match is found?

Every time we receive an application to join the Voluntary Register we check to see if there is a matching link. If there is we will contact you in line with the instructions you provided when you joined the register.

How likely is a link to occur?

The Authority is actively promoting the Voluntary Register to encourage people to join. As the Register grows, the chance of a link increases. However, many early donations were made in a climate of secrecy and anonymity so there are no guarantees that a link will be made.

Where a donor code is not available, it may not be possible to identify matching applications. Pre-1988 procedures are the hardest to link as the record keeping provisions of clinics have changed

significantly, from a time when the purpose was to protect the anonymity of the donors and families, to the current practices. This means that records may not always be complete, and that it may not be possible to identify a donor code.

Where a person is deceased, and therefore not able to provide consent to access information from their medical records, the applicant will be notified.

Is there someone I can talk this through with?

Yes, we encourage you to seek counselling and we have a list of approved donor-linking counsellors. Contact details are available from the Authority.

Support groups

Donor Conception Support Group of Australia

This is a national self funded organisation, run by volunteers, which aims to provide support to those contemplating use of donor gametes or embryos, to existing parents and to children themselves.

PO Box 264

Ashburton Vic 3147

Tel: (02) 9724 1366 (National)

Tel: (03) 9401 5469 (Victoria)

<http://members.optushome.com.au/dcsg/>

The Voluntary Register is more correctly known as the Donor Treatment Procedure Information Register.

There are in fact two registers:

The first covers all people who were involved with a donor procedure since 1 July 1998 and was established under the provisions of Section 82 of the *Infertility Treatment Act 1995*.

The second is the Pre-1988 Donor Treatment Procedure Information Register, which was established under the provisions of Part 7A of the *Infertility Treatment (Amendment) Act 2001*. It includes all people who were involved with a donor procedure before 1 July 1988, the date of proclamation of the *Infertility (Medical Procedures) Act 1984*, which established the 1984 Central Register.

The application form that you should use will be labelled post-1988 or pre-1988. You should choose the form based on when you were involved.