

## A snapshot from the Victorian Registry of Births, Death and Marriages (BDM) for 2015-16

This financial year has seen a closer working relationship between VARTA and BDM, based on amendments to Victorian donor conception laws enacted on 29 June 2015. The new legislation has seen a significant rise in the number of applications to the donor registers which has, in turn, resulted in much activity for both agencies.

Under the current system, applications to the donor registers are lodged with BDM, which then refers applicants to VARTA's Donor Register Services for information and support. People contacted as a result of the application are also able to access support services from VARTA. Further information is available on page 12.

The Registrar for BDM has provided VARTA with the following data for the period to 30 June 2016 for monitoring and public education purposes.

### 10-woman limit for donors

In Victoria, a donor treatment procedure may not be carried out if it may result in more than ten women having children who are genetic offspring of the donor. In the past financial year, there were no notifications received from registered ART providers in relation to this limit.

### Doctors carrying out artificial insemination outside of registered ART providers

Doctors carrying out artificial insemination (AI), other than on behalf of a registered ART provider, are required to notify BDM of each AI procedure and resultant pregnancies or births. There were no AI notifications from individual doctors in the past financial year.

### Donor registers

BDM manages the two registers that record information about people taking part in, or born from, donor treatment: the Central Register and the Voluntary Register.

A statistical snapshot of the numbers of people who have been registered on the donor registers and who have applied for information from the Central Register and Voluntary Register – as well as some information about their applications – is provided in the following pages.

## Donor registers and changes to legislation

Over the past few years, parliamentary reviews and legislative changes have affected the rights of donor-conceived people in Victoria to have access to information about their genetic heritage.

The most recent legislative amendments, passed in 2016, give all donor-conceived people, no matter when they were born, the right to know their genetic heritage. As a result, donors will no longer have the ability to prevent the release of their identifying information to their donor offspring, but will be able to determine how – or if – they have contact with an applicant. The amendments also provide for the management of the Central and Voluntary Registers to be moved from BDM to VARTA. This transition will enable VARTA to be a 'one door in' provider of support and information to donors, donor-conceived people, and their families. The new laws will come into effect by 1 March 2017.

These new laws build on the 2014 amendments which enabled:

- those conceived from donations prior to 1 July 1988 to obtain identifying information about their donors with donor consent, and
- those donors who donated prior to 1 July 1988 to obtain identifying information about their donor offspring with the offspring's consent.

These amendments do not apply to donations made from 1998 where donors consented to have their identity released at the time of donation.

## The Central Register

The Central Register contains information about people involved in donor treatment procedures, including the donor-conceived person, his/her parent(s) and the donor. The information is provided to BDM by the clinics where treatment occurred and also directly from parents.

The following people can apply for information from the Central Register:

- donor-conceived people
- parents of a donor-conceived person
- donors
- descendants of donor-conceived people.

The register makes it possible to exchange information between donors, parents and donor-conceived people and for them to possibly arrange to meet. This process is known as donor linking.

Currently, if records and contact details can be found, the donor will be contacted and asked to give consent to the release of identifying information for donor-conceived people conceived from gametes donated prior to 1998. Those conceived from gametes donated after 1998 can obtain identifying information about their donor on reaching adulthood, as their donor consented at the time of donation.

### Registrations on the Central Register – year ending 30 June 2016

Clinic notifications of births	From sperm donation	From egg donation	From both egg & sperm donation	Total
Total notified as at 30 June 2015	4,968	1,782	391	<b>7,141</b>
From 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016	373	137	55	<b>565</b>
<b>Total notified as at 30 June 2016</b>	<b>5,341</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>7,706</b>

The Central Register was notified of 565 births – a third more than in the previous financial year (426).

Legislative changes enacted on 29 June 2015 resulted in pre-1988 birth records being added to the Central Register in this reporting period.

Of the 7,706 donor-conceived children registered on the Central Register, 3,107 are now 18 years or older and eligible to apply for information about their donor.

The number of applications to the Central Register has almost tripled compared to the previous reporting period (102 versus 35).



Registered donors by type	Sperm donor	Egg donor	Total
Total registered as at 30 June 2015	1,127	1,506	<b>2,633</b>
New donors registered 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016	476	114	<b>590</b>
<b>Total registered donors as at 30 June 2016</b>	<b>1,603</b>	<b>1,620</b>	<b>3,223</b>

The number of new donors registered in 2015-16 was 590, which is around double the number in the previous financial year (298).

The increase in the number of sperm donors registered (476) almost tripled in 2015-16 compared with the previous year (120). This number includes pre-1988 sperm donors added to the register as a result of the 2014 legislative amendments enacted on 29 June 2015.

As at 30 June 2016, the average age of new egg donors whose eggs produced a child was 34 years 5 months (virtually unchanged from the previous year). With the addition of pre-1988 sperm donors to the Central Register, accurate calculations of the age of new sperm donors cannot be provided for 2015-16.

### Applications to the Central Register – 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016

Applications type	Number of applications
<b>Applications for identifying information only</b>	
From donor	3*
From donor-conceived person	1
From recipient parent	18
<b>Total applications for identifying information</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Applications for non-identifying information only</b>	
From donor	4*
From donor-conceived person	10
From recipient parent	1
<b>Total applications for non-identifying information</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Applications for both identifying and non-identifying information</b>	
From donor	7*
From donor-conceived person	39
From recipient parent	19
<b>Total applications for both information</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Total applications to the Central Register in 2015-16</b>	<b>102</b>

\* As donors may have more than one offspring, a donor may make multiple applications.

The largest number of applications was from donor-conceived people (50), followed by recipient parents (38) and donors (14 – some may have made multiple applications).

## The Voluntary Register

The Voluntary Register contains information supplied voluntarily by donor-conceived people, donors and parents, making themselves available for potential information exchange or contact. Donor-conceived people, donors and parents can also use the register to exchange additional information. Family members (and descendants) can also record their wishes in relation to exchanging information with another party. In this way, links and information exchange between various parties can be facilitated.

**The number of applications to the Voluntary Register (88) increased by 60 per cent compared with the previous year (55).**

### Applications to the Voluntary Register

Applicant type	Number of applications 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016	Cumulative total
Donor	36	257
Donor-conceived person	23	133
Recipient parent	27	221
Relative	2	2
<b>Total applications</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>613</b>

As more people register information on the Voluntary Register, the likelihood of matches or information exchange increases. The number of linked applications is shown below.

### Applicants to the Voluntary Register – linked in the year ending 30 June 2016

Applicant type	Number of linked applications
Donor	3
Donor-conceived person	14
Recipient parent	19
Relative	2
<b>Total linked applications</b>	<b>38</b>

**The total number of applications to the donor registers in 2015-16 (190) is more than double the number in the previous year (90).**

## Achievements

### VARTA's Donor Register Services

From 29 June 2015, VARTA implemented the 2014 legislative amendments to the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008*, including developing the counselling, donor-linking and intermediary services for donor-conceived people, parents, donors and their families.

Connecting people linked by donor treatment remains a relatively new process both nationally and internationally. The new service development was informed by recommendations from the service's reference group which includes health professionals, donor-conceived people, donors and parents.

VARTA is a pioneering agency in this area and the experience gained through its services will have lasting impact on the processes and approaches developed for use by other providers of donor-linking support services, nationally and internationally.

### Information and support sessions

People who applied to the donor registers after 29 June 2015 have been referred to VARTA by BDM for an information and support session.

Following 162 referrals from BDM, VARTA provided 138 sessions during the past financial year. The session helps the applicant to think through the implications of potential contact and what this might mean for the other person. Each applicant completes a Statement of Reasons form which explains why they have applied and the short and long-term goals they have for information exchange/contact. This form is then sent to the person the applicant wants information about to help them decide whether to consent.

### Support networks

Staff within the Donor Register Services work closely with all parties affected by donor conception. VARTA facilitates the Donor-Conceived Adult Network meetings for donor-conceived people held at VANISH. It also has regular contact with the Melbourne Anonymous Sperm Donors – MADMen. This group comprises men who were sperm donors for IVF programs, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, and welcomes those from later periods as well.