

# Information for donor-conceived people

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## Contact as a result of a Central Register application by a donor

June 2017

You may have learned about your conception because your sperm or egg donor has made an application to the Central Register under the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008 (Vic)* (the Act) for information about any children born as a result of their donation. **Your donor is not entitled to receive identifying information about you without your consent.**

As a donor-conceived person you are also entitled to apply to the Central Register for information about your donor under the Act.

## From anonymity to openness

When donor conception was first practised, sperm and egg donations were made anonymously. Historically, parents were encouraged to maintain secrecy about their donor treatment and their experience of infertility. Time has shown that this approach may not have been in the best interests of the child born. For many donor-conceived people, learning of the details of their conception later in life can cause shock and a range of difficult emotions.

## VARTA is here to support you

If you did not know that you were donor conceived, this application may have come as a complete surprise. This may cause you and your family significant distress. It is likely that you will need time to process this information.

It can be beneficial for people to talk about this with someone who has worked in this field, such as a VARTA counsellor. It can also help to be connected with other donor-conceived people who have had similar experiences. VARTA has worked extensively with people who are donor conceived and can assist you as you try to come to terms with your donor conception.

VARTA can also help to support your siblings and parents who are likely to be affected also. This is a free service.

**VARTA can help you to decide how to respond to this application. It is likely you will need time to make this decision.**

VARTA staff will remain neutral and respectful of people's choices and opinions, **maintaining privacy at all times.**

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### You have options

You have choices and control over whether you want to share information and/or have contact with your donor.

You may wish to consider:

- using a **VARTA counsellor** to discuss options and any concerns
- writing a letter including **non-identifying information** e.g. medical, cultural, hobbies, personality, which will be provided to the applicant by a VARTA counsellor
- **corresponding** without revealing identifying information about yourself via the **letterbox/email service** or by a **non-identifying email address**
- using the **VARTA donor-linking intermediary support service** to begin contact. This could potentially include a **facilitated meeting** with a VARTA counsellor present to support you
- lodging a **contact preference statement** specifying your chosen method of contact or if you wish to have no contact with them
- **not consenting to any information being released at all.**

VARTA can assist with the initial exchange of information or contact if this is what you decide to do.

### Lodging a contact preference

A contact preference **enables the donor-conceived person to specify their preference for the way they would like contact to occur**, e.g. by email, phone or in person, or through information exchange via a post-box service. Donor-conceived people can also specify to have 'no contact'.

Prior to the release of any identifying information the donor must sign an undertaking to comply with any contact preferences lodged. The donor is given a copy of any contact preference. **Penalties may apply if this undertaking is breached.**

*For further information:*

**Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority**

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