

Information for parents

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



June 2017

Responding to an application

Being contacted as a result of an application by your egg or sperm donor to the Central Register under the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008* (Vic) for identifying information about your child may be quite unexpected. You may not have been aware that donors could apply to the Central Register for information. Additionally, you may not have told your child that they are donor conceived.

Please be reassured however, that your donor is not entitled to receive identifying information about you or your child without your consent or your child's consent if they are 18 years of age or older.

Thinking it over

While the donor may have been considering making this application for some time you are likely to need to think through the implications for yourself and for your family.

Time is often needed to process the information. You may also have other pressing issues in your life. As a result, you may need time to talk to other family members about what you want to do.

Legal considerations

- donors have the right to apply for identifying information about your child(ren) if your child(ren) is/are 18 years or older
- no identifying information (name or contact details) is released without your consent
- donors do not have parental rights or responsibilities
- some donors apply while the children are under 18 years to enable parents the opportunity to tell their child(ren) they are donor-conceived
- you have choices and control over whether you want to share information and/or have contact.

VARTA has experience of many positive connections made by families who have linked with their donor. Many parents of donor-conceived children have found these connections beneficial for them and their family.

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The Central Register process

All applicants attend an information and support session with a VARTA counsellor before proceeding. A **Statement of reasons** is written following this session and is shared with the subject of the application to help them decide how they wish to proceed. The **Statement of reasons** explains why they have applied for information and their hopes for information exchange/contact.

You have options and choices

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** via the letterbox service or by a non-identifying email address
- using the **VARTA donor-linking intermediary support service** to begin contact and to perhaps meet
- not consenting to releasing identifying information
- lodging a **contact preference** for any contact between the donor and your child. This is a legally binding document, lasting for five years. It enables you to specify a preferred method of contact (email, telephone etc) with the donor of your child. You can also choose to have no contact. The donor must undertake to abide by your contact preference and receives a copy of it. Unless withdrawn, amended or lapsed, your contact preference expires six months after your child turns 18 and he/she may lodge their own contact preference. Penalties may apply if this undertaking is breached.

Support services

You can speak privately and confidentially with a counsellor at VARTA to discuss how the application may affect you and your family as well as your options for proceeding. People close to you who may be impacted by the application are also welcome to speak with the counsellor e.g. your partner and/or children. **This is a free service.**

For further information:

Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority

Phone: (03) 8601 5250

Email: dcrs@varta.org.au

Web: www.varta.org.au