

# Writing your Statement of reasons

February 2017

Victorian assisted reproductive treatment (ART) legislation enables all donor-conceived people, parents, and donors to apply for identifying information through the Donor Conception Register Services at the Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority (VARTA).

Donor-conceived adults are legally entitled to receive details of their donor's name, date of birth and donor code. A donor is not required to consent to the release of this information. Donors are also able to apply for information about their resulting offspring. Parents of donor-conceived people are also able to apply for information. If the applicant to the donor conception registers is a donor or parent, identifying information will only be released if consent has been received from the person about whom an application is made.

Before receiving identifying information, all applicants attend an individual information and support session with VARTA. During this session, an applicant will complete a **Statement of reasons** form which describes why they have applied for information and what they would like to happen in the short and long term. When the form is completed, it is forwarded to the person they would like information about.

Applicants can fill in these forms during their information and support session at VARTA. They are also welcome to take their draft **Statement of reasons** home and complete it in their own time.

## What should I say in my **Statement of reasons**?

The **Statement of reasons** enables the other party to get to know you a little and to understand your motivation for applying for information about them. It may be your first form of contact, so it is possible you could feel daunted by the process and unsure about what to say. It is often helpful to the other person to receive introductory information about you, why you have applied, and your hopes about possible future information exchange and/or contact.

It may help you to write down ideas about what you would like to say before you come in to the VARTA office. The staff at VARTA can help you write something which conveys your voice and how you feel, helping the other person form a greater understanding of you as a person.

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### Consider what you would like the other person to know about you

Your **Statement of reasons** is likely to be the first information the other person will receive about you. It may also be their first communication with someone with whom they are connected by donation. It is difficult to know how they will respond to your application so it helps to keep things simple. Ensure that you are completely comfortable about the information you share with them. If there are specific questions you have, this is the time to ask.

### Be clear about your short term and long term goals

It is helpful for the other person to understand how you would like to begin to communicate with each other initially and if this goes well, what you would like to happen in the future. Some people want only medical information or details about their cultural background but do not want to have ongoing contact. Others are open to friendship.

People often like to begin communicating via email. This might be using their usual email address, although some people prefer to set up a non-identifying email account in the beginning. People may share photographs if they wish.

It takes time to get to know another person. It is sensible to approach things in a respectful and carefully-paced manner. For example, instead of stating "I want to meet you", you could say: "If you'd like to, it is my hope that we could meet one day".

### Respect for the other person's wishes

It is likely that one or both of you may feel trepidation about your situation - therefore, it is better to go slowly at first. Taking time to get to know one another enables people to adjust to the situation more easily and understand the other person's perspective.

It is important that each person believes that their wishes about future contact are respected. Being sensitive to the other person is more likely to promote a better long-term outcome. If both parties feel comfortable with their initial communication, you might eventually decide to meet.

### Social media/internet footprint

The more information you share about yourself the easier it is for the other person to find you online. This is the time to update your social media settings if you want to protect your privacy or if you are a parent and wish to protect your children's privacy.

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### Understand that the other person may take time to respond

If the other person can be located, it is important to understand that they might take a while to respond to your statement. While you may have been thinking about making contact for a long time, your outreach may come as a surprise to the other person. They may need time to digest things or have other pressing issues in their lives. They may also need time to talk to other family members about your application.

### VARTA staff are here to support you

VARTA staff will keep you updated of any developments throughout the application process. We hope you feel comfortable contacting staff if you have any concerns. We are only a phone call away.

*For further information:*

**Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority**

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