



# VARTA

Victorian Assisted Reproductive  
Treatment Authority

## **VARTA's Twilight Seminar "How are you going? - Experiences of donor-conception", held April 2013**

### **The truth sets you free**

At the seminar Ross talked about discovering recently, in his early thirties, that he was donor-conceived.

Ross speaks of his relief in knowing the truth and his belief in the importance of honesty: "'Where do I come from?' is such a fundamental question and I think that for everyone they have the right to know".

### Transcript - Ross, donor-conceived person

So, you know my first name. I discovered I was donor conceived relatively recently, in 2009, under fairly acrimonious circumstances. I can say for me I think it was a real relief to find out some of the reasons why I was such a vagabond. I don't think I was ever really, for one of a better phrase, the black sheep of the family but I think, it was just something that really made sense I suppose. I have a sibling who reacted very differently and what I say will be curtailed because of that in her desires for nothing to come out, hopefully if you do know me personally then tell me afterwards. Not that I am concerned about that, and I suppose my concern is that you are fully aware of the implications because the gametes grow up and, you know, some of us are pretty tall in the end.

And as I say for me it was, my wife is a really good detective and this is the thing, you can never really keep a secret for ever, at some stage it comes out whether it is someone that isn't from the family and doesn't know all that well can see through a lot of the other facades that come up and I suppose it began with her making casual jest at me and how I didn't really look like anyone from my family and at gatherings and you know, your dad's not your dad Ross, come on. And I was sort of, alright, alright and after a while it got a bit annoying but she was actually really shocked when she found out it really was the case, even though she is very instinctual and she knew.

So it does come out and I suppose that is the key issue is that, you have control over that and I really think that younger is better, I suppose I don't have that option, I was early 30s when I found out and the contact that I have had with donor conceived people in the three years that I have known, the overwhelming majority of us found out under unpleasant circumstances. It is usually when a divorce or a death happens and that was the case with my family, my social dad passed away, who will always be my dad, I don't know who my biological father is, as yet, but I am a pretty good detective myself and I will find out one way or the other I think.

So if you have the chance to present that information in a way at a time, I mean it is always going to be hard, I can see, it is, it was hard for my mother. But there was a time where she decided that it was time. And as I say I was relieved that she had gotten this secret off her chest because it was a huge thing to keep even from your best friends. And your whole life and I am thrilled that she did, but, yeah, my sibling related very differently and it was a very negative experience.

So I suppose, you know, secrecy can be damaging and I think the more open you are the better. I think it would have changed a fair bit, I mean I understand why my parents did that and I understand their fears and I think, like some of the examples of the research and the little quotes we get from there that mostly people are happy. And we are grateful for being alive, I wouldn't be here without medical intervention as much as my default settings that I don't like the idea of it but, you

know, I am here by virtue of that and it is part of the world we live in and in many ways that is a great thing for many people, as long as it is not abused.

And I suppose, 'where do I come from?', is such a fundamental question and I think that for everyone they have that right to know that should at least be equal with the desire to have children. Or your particular desire to have children as a couple, so be aware of that from someone on the other end of it. And very interesting that a lot of the DI and parents and egg donor parents turn out to be just as wonderful and I am sure flawed as well as the general public. But there is no doubt about your desire and that can turn you into great parents and make you really receptive to the needs of a child. But honesty I think should be fundamental in any of that and I encourage you to be up front about it.

And you know we are the other silent party and it takes a long time for us to even when we discover at a late age to articulate it and that is part of the process for me and that is part of the reason that I wanted to speak tonight and I am sure you will get a few more of unauthorised comments when we are not being filmed a little bit later.

I really, that is the main juice to what I have to say for the sake of brevity, there is a lot more that we could say and a lot more details that I could go into. How we going for time, Kate?

Alright, but yeah I just encourage you to be honest and I think the sooner the better. I mean I don't know there are certain ages, I have children myself and they are very curious, and they ask the questions and you find yourself in that position of feeling like you have to cover up. I guess you can put it in the context and say it is a lie for the team and all that sort of stuff but you do find yourself implicit in that cycle and I just think the old adage of the truth setting you free is something that resonates, so, yeah I do encourage you to be open and that will do from me I think.

**The End**

For more information about donor-conception, contact Kate Bourne on 03 8601 5250 or email [kbourne@varta.org.au](mailto:kbourne@varta.org.au).