

Donor Conception Register Services



**VARTA manages the Central
and Voluntary Registers.**

We support people who are donor-conceived and their families, parents who have used a donor, donors and their families.

Donor Conception Register Services

What are the Donor Conception Register Services?

The Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority (VARTA) is an independent statutory authority.

VARTA manages the donor conception registers and offers a confidential advice and support service to people applying to the registers (the applicants) for information about people to whom they are connected as a result of donor conception treatment.

We also support people contacted as a result of an application, (the subjects) and their families.

Who can apply to the registers for information?

- donor-conceived people
- parents who have used donor sperm, eggs or embryos
- donors
- descendants of donor-conceived people
- relatives of all of the above (Voluntary Register only).

What VARTA provides

- available non-identifying information about the subject of an application e.g. medical history, interests
- identifying information about the subject of an applications, where permissible
- a letterbox or non-identifying email service to help people exchange information without revealing names
- facilitated meetings between connected people, when requested
- help for people lodging their legally enforceable preferences for contact, which may include no contact.

Donor Conception Register Services

VARTA's counsellors are available to provide support to people linked on the Donor Conception Registers who are interested in exchanging information and making contact. Our impartial, experienced staff respect people's choices and opinions and maintain privacy and confidentiality at all times.

From anonymity to openness

When donor conception was first practised, donations were made anonymously. Experience over time has shown that donor-conceived people, their parents, and donors often want to learn more about one another and are often willing to share information about themselves.

People may be interested in medical history, personality, appearance, hobbies, and interests. Some may write to each other occasionally and others may develop a friendship.

Victorian law

All donor-conceived people, regardless of when they were conceived, can apply to the Central Register to seek information about their donor. Donors' identifying information (including name, date of birth and donor code) will be provided, if records are available.

Parents can also apply for identifying information about their child's donor. However, this information can only be released with the donor's consent.

People who donated before 1998, adult donor-conceived people, and the parents of donor-conceived people younger than 18 years, can lodge a contact preference to indicate the type of contact they want, if any, with a person who applies for information about them. Penalties may apply if this is breached.

Central Register – what information is stored?

Non-identifying information, which does not reveal personal identity, is stored on the Central Register. This may include hair and eye colour, hobbies, interests, education, or occupation. The gender, month and year of birth of others born from the same donor are also stored on the Central Register. Non-identifying information can be disclosed without consent.

Identifying information, which includes a person's name, date of birth and donor code, is also stored. Contact information (phone number, email and home address) can also be stored on the Central Register.

Who can apply and what are the conditions for release of identifying information?

Donor-conceived people can apply for identifying information held on the register, about their donor, as adults (or younger if a VARTA counsellor considers they are mature enough). **All donor-conceived people and their descendants are entitled to receive identifying information about their donor.** Donors who donated before 1998 can lodge a **contact preference** specifying the type of contact they want with their donor offspring, including the option of no contact.

Parents can apply at any time for identifying information about their child's donor. A donor's identifying information will only be released to the parents if the donor has consented for this to occur.

Donors can apply for identifying information about donor-conceived offspring. This information will only be released with the consent of the offspring or their parents, in the case of donor-conceived people younger than 18 years. Donor-conceived adults (or parents of children) can also lodge a contact preference, including the option of no contact.

Donor Conception Register Services

Central Register process

Apply

- The applicant sends their completed application form to VARTA.
- VARTA searches the register for the person about whom the applicant has requested information.

Attend

- The applicant attends an information and support session at VARTA.
- VARTA helps the applicant complete a *Statement of reasons* form describing what they hope will happen in the short and longer term.

Search

- VARTA locates the relevant record (if available) and searches for the current contact details.
- VARTA may use a specialised search agency to find current contact details if required. If the record and/or contact details are not available, VARTA will let the applicant know.

Outreach

- VARTA contacts the person the applicant wants to know more about (the subject), to inform them about the application. The applicant's *Statement of reasons* is included, to help them understand why the applicant has applied for information about them.
- The person who is the subject of the application is invited to attend an information and support session with VARTA before deciding on the type of contact they want, if any.

Decision

- If applicable, the subject makes a decision about whether and how they would like to have contact with the applicant (this may include lodging a contact preference form). The applicant must sign an undertaking to abide by any contact preferences lodged by the subject, before identifying information can be released.

Outcome

- Connection or information exchange may occur, depending on decisions made.

Donor Conception Register Services

VARTA can assist with the early stages of contact or information exchange if both people agree. It can support anyone affected by the application (e.g. partner, children).

Voluntary Register – how it works

The Voluntary Register functions differently from the Central Register.

People involved in donor conception who hope to connect with their genetic relatives can lodge their details and their preferences regarding exchanging information on the **Voluntary Register**.

If two or more applicants are matched on the Voluntary Register they are contacted by VARTA and can exchange information if they wish.

If there is no match on the register, an applicant will need to wait until another person with whom they are linked applies to lodge their details on the register.

Who can apply?

The Voluntary Register is available for those who can use the Central Register and also for:

- donor-conceived people who want to connect with others conceived with the same donor (donor-siblings)
- parents who want to connect with other parents who have used the same donor
- donors who are open to providing information to their offspring, but do not want to approach them in case they are unaware they are donor-conceived
- relatives of the above and descendants of donor-conceived people.

Voluntary Register process

Apply

- Applicant sends their completed application form to VARTA.

Search

- VARTA locates the donor record, if available.

Match

- VARTA looks for matches with other applicant/s and searches for current contact details.
- VARTA contacts each applicant and asks them to attend an individual information and support session. This session is required before identifying information can be released.
- Applicants complete a *Statement of reasons* form, describing their wishes for sharing information or meeting, and how they would like this to happen in the short and long term.
- *Statement of reasons* forms are exchanged between applicants, via the VARTA counsellor.

Linking

- If applicants agree, VARTA assists them to connect.
- VARTA can assist in the early stages of information exchange or contact if requested by both people.

“Knowing where you come from is a fundamental part of understanding who you are.”

Ross, donor-conceived

Donor Conception Register Services

There is no etiquette book for connecting donors and donor-conceived people

Connecting people linked by donor treatment is relatively new and everyone is still learning. People may find the process exciting, but it may also be a little daunting.

It is usual to feel unsure about how to proceed.

Contact is more likely to be positive if you:

- have realistic expectations
- have an open mind
- do not feel pressured
- communicate honestly about what you would like to happen – and be yourself
- try to consider the other person's or people's views and their family situation as well as yours
- do not rush – get to know each other gradually.

To apply for information from the Donor Conception Registers visit the VARTA website www.varta.org.au

You can also phone (03) 8601 5250 for an application form to be sent to you.