Our journey was not one we could avoid. I am unable to have children as I was born male, when I transitioned medically, I was not asked if I wanted to keep any genetic material, I was not allowed the space to consider options, because when I transitioned surrogacy was not well discussed. It was a secret, it was illegal.

When my husband and I discussed options to have children, we looked at adopting or fostering, we were met with resistance because I identify as transgender.

But I have a lot of friends and family who love me and through discussions with some; I had my sister offer to carry (although she is 6 years older and became physically sick when pregnant).

We went through the legal process of counselling and legal appointments.

We tried for several months before stopping due to the emotional tole every month when we failed.

I approached some friends; one agreed to be an egg donor and one a surrogate.

we went through Melbourne IVF and during covid, we able to create only one viable embryo which unfortunately didn't stick.

We were again back where we were but with limited options.

Our surrogate although agreeable to keep going, had already paused her life for almost 2 years; and we couldn't keep asking her to wait while we went through all the medical processes.

My husband actually suggested we look overseas.

We noted a lot of successful pregnancies had occurred with commercial surrogacy.

We discussed our thoughts around paying someone vs someone doing it out of the goodness of their heart.

We sat with the thought of it being a transaction, a job.

We researched some of the protections agencies have in place and went with a more reputable agency.

Our surrogate and I live in completely different time zones, and we don't speak the same language.

But we have a bond.

She spoke about how doing this would allow her to achieve her goal of buying a house; something her work alone she would not be able to achieve.

She sloke about how she also gets to do something life changing for us and helping us make a family.

Our surrogate is a smart and strong woman; she was never taken advantage of. It was not a fake relationship we built over the weeks and months of pregnancy.

She was allowed body autonomy and with that determined that she could choose to do this.

For us, it allowed more choice with surrogates; it removed some of the concern we had Which all parents have; what if she won't give up the baby, what if she doesn't follow our wishes etc.

This is also a business contract where we are both held accountable under a legal framework that is built on just emotion.

If Australia was to introduce new laws recognising this as a viable option; likely an increase in births would occur, the financial incentives may allow for some people to achieve things they may not have been able to previously.

One of the biggest concerns is taking advantage of others during this.

My surrogate had a fulltime job. She was not reliant on this money to live or support her family. She had ongoing psychology during and after the pregnancy and we have built a solid friendship.