Australian Law Reform Commission: Adult Feedback

I am making this submission to contribute to the Australian Law Reform Commission's review of Australian surrogacy laws, policies, and practices.

1. I am writing about my experience

- ○ in Australia
- ◉ Overseas

2. I have experience as an

- ◉ Intended parent
- ○ Egg Donor
- ○ Parent
- ○ Surrogate

3. What are some good things about your experience of surrogacy?

As a same sex family, surrogacy enabled us to have a family when it would have been otherwise difficult. My sister is the egg donor for my sons, and my husband is the sperm donor.

The arrangement enabled us to have a child that is genetically related to us, and to have an arrangement where, in addition to our parents, our sons know their surrogate, egg donor and sperm donor (father), and have a strong and

4. What were the difficulties you encountered?

Yes. Going through surrogacy in California was expensive - it took us about five years to pay off the costs, yet it is the best regulated surrogacy system in the world. We also had to rely on the United States healthcare system, including for a period in NICU, which is extortionately expensive and not highly functional.

I understand the costs have only grown since.

5. Should there be more education about surrogacy? Why?

Yes. In my experience, community understanding of surrogacy is poor and indeed misunderstood and based on falsities and fears, to a great extent.

In my view, educating the public and demystifying the process, including through greater visibility of families created through surrogacy, would lead to greater understanding and acceptance. It would lead to greater

6. When a child is born through surrogacy, should their parents be legally recognised straight away? Explain why.

Yes. Although the law in NSW has recently changed to enable us to apply for parentage, we have not done so, in part because our sons will soon be adults, because we're very busy with parenting and working. We also have not applied, because it feels humiliating and insulting to apply for legal recognition of something we have lived, breathed and sweated for 14 years together and with our children.

7. What needs to be improved about surrogacy for Australians?

I will answer 7 and 8 together. Having a family through surrogacy, I do hear about many experiences of surrogacy; more than most. I appreciate that there will be great examples of altruistic surrogacy, and examples of compensated surrogacy that goes wrong.

In my experience, I have only heard bad experiences arising out of altruistic surrogacy. I

8. In Australia, surrogates and donors are not allowed to be paid. What do you think of that?

See answer to 7.

9. Is there anything else you want to share about surrogacy and the rules around it?

Yes. A lot of views that I hear or read about concerning compensated surrogacy, to be frank, I held before going through surrogacy in California. It gave me a visceral aversion, at the idea of paying money to someone to have a child for me, or to ask anyone to do anything so mammoth and gruelling. Honestly, were there other options to create a family at the time, I probably would not have undertaken a surrogacy arrangement at all.