

I don't proclaim to be an expert on surrogacy or the current surrogacy situation in Australia, however I am an Australian Citizen with a story I would like to share for the consideration of the key decision makers in the review of surrogacy laws in Australia.

I was born in Adelaide in 1989, raised by my Mum and Dad and moved to Brisbane at age 12. Fortunate enough to be the oldest sister of my beautiful baby brother, born in 1992. We grew up together and when I was 16 and he was 13, my Brother came out as gay. We celebrated. We were so happy for him. Deep down though I remember feeling a heavy sadness at the discrimination and challenges I knew my brother would experience in his lifetime because of this one single beautiful aspect of who he is and so clearly was from such a young age.

My brother met the love of his life in 2015 and thanks to the 2017 plebiscite outcome, married his husband that same year. Eight years into their marriage, they have bought a house, renovated, raised a rescue puppy into a very loved dog, graduated tertiary study and both succeeded in their respective careers of nursing and clinical psychology. They have been incredible contributors to the Brisbane and broader Australian community.

Along this path, they both developed a deep longing and maternal drive to start a family. They have asked two close female friends if they would be voluntary traditional or gestational surrogates, both of which declined. They have researched and sought financial and legal advice around overseas surrogacy. But unfortunately, like most mid-age career professionals of their generation they are in a large amount of debt (having both studied and purchased property). Their HELP/HECS debts and mortgage combined is substantial and their "essential service" occupations provide below average incomes, so at this point in time in their lives, while they're more than ready to start a family, they are prohibited from being able to afford the >\$100,000 AUD cost upfront associated with an overseas surrogacy process.

In essence, they have been unable to successfully navigate the high risk and seemingly unregulated environment that is Australia's current surrogacy system.

As a sister who loves my brother more than anyone else on this planet my heart pains at the prospect of my brother never being a father. He is so capable and deserving of this privileged role and responsibility. He is the most level headed, kind, considerate and selfless person I know.

Why am I, as my brothers oldest sister, left carrying a guilt that I should volunteer as a gestational surrogate for my brother and brother-in-law, because the Australian government has failed to act and put in place a system to allow them to access to a surrogate of his and his husbands choice. I have absolutely no doubt there is an amazing women out in the Australian community somewhere, who loves being pregnant and would find fulfillment and purpose in being a surrogate for my brother and brother-in-law, who are in a position to afford the medical costs and a modest lump-sum payment (\$20,000 - \$50,000 AUD).

Why can I as a female attend a fertility clinic, select a sperm donor (from

Australia or overseas), have a baby and be supported and protected in this process legally by the government and my brother cannot do what is effectively the male equivalent? When thought of in this way, it is seemingly discrimination.

Access to a system where people wanting to be parent can:

1. be connected with a female within the Australian community who is willing and able to be a traditional or gestational surrogate, and
 2. all involved can have the appropriate legal protections associated with such a commitment
- is well overdue.

If we recognise that two men can commit to the institution of marriage, and we allow them access to foster children, adopt children or engage a voluntary surrogate (with seemingly high legal and financial risks, not to mention the emotional cost should the surrogate decide to maintain custody of the child), why have we not created a system that supports people in accessing surrogates in a robust, transparent and accountable way? We have an obligation to our diverse minority Australians and growing group of Australians experiencing fertility challenges to uplift and grow the current surrogate system in Australia.

I value the work you are undertaking on this review and hope that my contributions assist your process. Thankyou.