

# Making an application to the Voluntary Register

**VR**

February 2017

## How the Voluntary Register works

The Voluntary Register allows people who have been involved in donor conception in Victoria at any time to voluntarily record information about themselves and their wishes and to exchange information with other people with whom they are genetically connected.

## Fee

There is **no charge** to apply to lodge information with Voluntary Register.

## Who can apply?

- **Donor-conceived people** aged 18 years and older who wish to connect with donor siblings (other people conceived by the same donor) and/or their donor.
- **Parents who wish to connect with other parents** who have used the same donor and/or their child's donor.
- **Donors** who are willing to provide information to their offspring or the parents who were treated with their sperm or egg donation.
- **Relatives and descendants** of all of the above.

Applicants can lodge information under the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008 (Vic)* (the Act) to the Voluntary Register and match with any of the people above. It is also possible that an applicant matches with people who are already in contact with each other as the donation of one donor can be used by up to ten women.

In most cases, a match will be on the basis of a unique donor code that is common to both parties. However, the only definitive way to ascertain a genetic link with another individual is to undertake genetic testing.

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### What information can be lodged?

An applicant can decide what information they wish to lodge. This can include information about:

- medical history
- family tree and cultural heritage
- interests, hobbies and personality
- photographs, videos
- anything else the applicant would like to share.

**No information will be shared without consent.**

### No match on the Voluntary Register

If there is **no corresponding match/link** on the Voluntary Register then the first applicant will need to wait until another person they are linked with applies and lodges information. As the numbers of people who apply to the register grows, there are likely to be more matches.

The applicant will be notified in the future as soon as a match is identified if they can be located.

**It is important to inform VARTA of any change to your contact details, so that you can be notified if and when there is a match.**

It is also important to inform VARTA if you or someone in your immediate family has health or medical information which could be important for someone with whom you are genetically linked.

The information can remain on the register for as long as the applicant wishes and can even be passed onto another matched applicant after someone has died, if consent was previously provided.

Sometimes it is not possible to link parties on the Voluntary Register if the records are poor, have been destroyed or where there is no record of a donor code or evidence to substantiate a link between parties.

### Matches on the Voluntary Register

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

**No information will be shared with anyone else on the Voluntary Register without consent. Disclosure is only in accordance with the wishes of the parties.**

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### Process for Voluntary Register match

Once an application to the Voluntary Register has been lodged, VARTA will check to see if there is a corresponding match.

1. If there is a match (or more than one match), each party will be notified and asked to attend an information and support session at VARTA.
2. During the session, the implications of sharing information and/or arranging to have contact with the other people are explored.
3. Together with the VARTA counsellor, applicants complete a **Statement of reasons**, outlining why they wish to connect and what outcome they hope for in the short and long term.
4. The **Statement of reason** forms are then exchanged with the other party/ies.
5. Each party chooses how they wish to proceed. All information exchanged, as well as any linking that takes place, will be subject to the wishes of those involved. The counsellor is available to support each party. Disclosure of identifying information is subject to an applicant receiving counselling on certain matters by a VARTA counsellor.

### Options for linking include:

- facilitated email exchange
- setting up a non-identifying email address
- a facilitated meeting supported by the VARTA counsellor
- exchanging contact details e.g. telephone, address.

### Privacy and disclosure of information

VARTA is responsible for the management of the Voluntary Register under the Act. VARTA will only collect, use, and release information in accordance with the provisions of the Act, the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic), the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) and the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic).

VARTA will use your information for:

- processing your application and carrying out donor linking services
- updating the Voluntary Register and Central Register
- statistical, educational or reporting purposes.

## Privacy and disclosure of information

Your information will only be disclosed to an individual with whom you are linked through this application in accordance with your wishes, either conveyed verbally or in writing to VARTA. No other parties will have access to your information without your consent. If you choose not to provide information on the application form, it may be difficult for VARTA to place your information on the Voluntary Register or to match you with another person on the register.

You may request that VARTA correct or amend information on the Voluntary Register at any time. You may access your information at any time by a request to VARTA.

If you wish to contact VARTA to discuss its privacy and information disclosure policies or access your information, please do not hesitate to do so.

## Contact VARTA

During the application process, VARTA staff will remain neutral and respectful of people's choices and opinions, **maintaining confidentiality at all times.**

*For further information:*

**Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority**

Phone: (03) 8601 5250

Email: [dcrs@varta.org.au](mailto:dcrs@varta.org.au)

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