

To The Program Manager,

Re. Submission in relation to the Independent review of the Human Reproductive Technology Act 1991 and Surrogacy Act 2008

When I was 16 (2001) I was diagnosed with MRKH, a condition where a girl is born without a uterus. At the same time the doctor advised me that I could never become pregnant, I was also told that surrogacy in WA was illegal and the only hope of me having children was via adoption. Thankfully that law did change and I hope it continues to evolve.

Currently someone with my condition is not able to create embryo's unless a surrogacy agreement is in place and has written approval from the Reproductive Technology Council. This has caused my husband and I much stress over the years. Learning in the last few years that my AMH level was considerably low, which indicates I have a low egg reserve, our time was very limited to create viable embryos. Knowing that we didn't have any immediate family members or close friends that were eligible to be a surrogate we have joined many online groups in the hopes of finding a special woman to help us create our family. Luckily we have found an amazing person and her family to go on this journey with us. The entire process of medical appointments, counselling, psychological testing, lawyer consultations and RTC approval takes substantial time and causes stress for my husband and I as well as our surrogate and her family, if after all of that it resulted in us not being able to even create embryo's then that is almost a year of wasted time for the surrogate where she could have been helping another very deserving couple. This is one of my biggest hopes for the changes to the Act, allowing couples in similar situations to myself, to create embryo's without a surrogacy agreement in place.

My husband and I have been incredibly lucky with our surrogacy journey and joined the community at a time when a surrogate and a couple were about to begin transfers and they successfully had a child. Before we met them, we were very disheartened about our possibility of ever finding someone that would be willing to carry a child for us, meeting someone that was actively pursuing being a surrogate gave us hope. I would love the Act to be more encouraging or supportive of a network for finding surrogates, one that promotes the surrogacy process and also provides support to those on their journey. WA doesn't have many women offering to be surrogates and I believe that is because of the lack of promotion and also the long process involved in obtaining the RTC approval.

In our process so far we have been involved with two prominent Perth medical clinics and although both have surrogacy coordinators we have received varying information from both of them. This indicates to me the lack of knowledge in WA regarding surrogacy in the medical fields. I believe the Act needs to be clearer in regards to obligations and support networks for all providers on the surrogacy journey so that they can then provide the best support to Intended Parents and Surrogates.

Hopefully our journey is successful and we are able to have a child, if that occurs we will then go through the arduous task of getting a parentage order. From what I understand this is a complicated

process again, it would be fantastic if the Act could streamline this process to make it easier and clearer for the parents and surrogates.

Surrogacy, like other fertility treatments, is a stressful time, not only emotionally but financially. Where we have been impacted the most financially is that IVF is not covered by Medicare when it is for surrogacy. As surrogacy has always been my only option, it is disappointing to know that again we are at disadvantage and have major hurdles to climb. It would be great if as part of the review it can promote Medicare to be available for surrogacy purposes.

As well as my own struggles, I have seen friends and family go overseas to pursue surrogacy solely due to the fact that it is not legal for homosexual couples in WA. This is a major downfall in the Act that really does need to be changed.

In summary, I have been part of the surrogacy community in WA for close to 3 years, what I have seen is many couples risk so much to pursue overseas surrogacy arrangements, purely due to the rigorous and difficult process here as well as the lack of surrogates. I would love for the Act to be more encouraging of surrogates as well as provide the support to people during the surrogacy process, also to allow embryo's to be created before a surrogate agreement and RTC approval.

Thank you for reading my submission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Ranger', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kate Ranger
14/03/2018