

Submission to Review of the Human Reproductive Technology Act 1991 and the
Surrogacy Act 2008

Submission on behalf of:

Australian Adoptee Rights Action Group (AARAG)

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During the 50s, 60s and 70s, now known as “the baby-scoop era”, thousands of us were removed from our gestational mothers for adoption.

We are now adults and have important testimony to contribute to the debate about surrogacy.

If you listen to our voices you will understand that our experience illustrates that the ethics of surrogacy are very, very simple.

Those of us in the Stolen Generation and from the era of Forced Adoption have testified over and over again that the loss of our mothers is a devastating loss with profound life-long and intergenerational impacts. Is anyone even listening?

Scientific studies – both animal and human – record that even temporary removal from a gestational mother is stressful for neonatal mammals causing a rise in heart rate (fear/anxiety), disrupted and reduction in sleep, the refusal of food and excessive crying. My own hospital records testify to this neonatal distress at removal. *Those of us who have suffered maternal-neonate separation testify that it has a life-long impact on our emotional and psychological wellbeing.*

Evolutionary biology tells us that babies understand the loss of their mothers at birth as “life-threatening.” What on earth is making people who otherwise appear to care about each other and human rights approve of something that

deliberately causes distress to babies? Childhood trauma has life-long impacts and mother loss at birth is traumatic.

Only an overwhelming sense of Western entitlement would allow the demands of adult desires and interests to trump the needs, desires and rights of neonates. This selfish prioritising of adult interests is even evidence in popular phrases such as a “right to adopt,” a “right to parent,” a “right to a family” (as opposed to a right to YOUR family), and my personal favourite: child as “gift.”

That adoptee you know, down the road, who seems really fine and “doesn’t have a problem with being adopted,” is speaking out of a lifetime of experience in developing coping mechanisms, founded on their initial neonatal adaptation to traumatic loss. Yet despite neonatal adaptation, high rates of homelessness, mental illness and suicide plague the adoptee community in defiance of a society which refuses to keep ANY records of adoptee outcomes, nor conduct ANY studies on adult adoptees, preferring to spin the myth that adoption has “good outcomes for most.” What appear to be “good outcomes” is not evidence to a lack of trauma but rather of the strength, resilience and adaptability of adopted people who want more than anything to feel “normal” and not to continue to feel disconnection with others, the devastating impact of the loss of their mothers at birth, in their emotional and psychological makeup.

The main argument I hear from people who don’t appear to oppose what is dishonestly termed “altruistic” surrogacy (there is nothing altruistic toward the neonate is there?) appears to be, “Surrogacy is ok if it’s done by a relative or friend.”

No – its not! Newborn babies should only ever be taken at birth if those babies are in dire danger of abuse or neglect by their mother because removal HURTS.

Simple: Allowing babies to continue their in-utero dependence and profoundly connected relationship with their own gestational mothers is natural – it displays a natural Goodness and Kindness toward human young and is illustrative of a society of people who have a basic connection with their own young: its is the most basic aspect of human empathy.

For all those who know little about neonatal experience: your relationship with your gestational mother is the first relationship with an adult human being that every human being has. It is the primary relationship of your existence and its deliberate destruction is absolutely disgusting. And, no, having her “live just around the corner” means nothing to the baby whose every desire is geared toward bodily connection with the body just exited. Every time the mother leaves the room is a fresh source of distress. But then, what would adoptees like us know?

The sense of entitlement of Westerners to the babies of other women knows no bounds and even today there are calls within Australia to make the renting of wombs a commercial enterprise (we all know that money is still exchanged in “altruistic” surrogacy anyway). *The apologies to the Stolen Generation for separating mothers and babies, the apologies to us from the Baby Scoop era for*

separating mothers and babies, is mere lip-service unless Australians make the effort to comprehend the atrocity that is neonate-removal.

And I have not even begun to mention the human rights abuses and exploitation that surrogacy imposes on all women including women in both developed and developing countries.

Adoptee/Donor Conceived/Surro-People/Child Rights is the newest civil rights movement enveloping the world. Please support us. Support your children. Support the next generation. The way we are being created and traded is commodification. Gifts are commodities – not human beings. I thought we outlawed this when we outlawed slavery.

Let's be a kinder society. Vegans protest against the cruelty of the removal of calves from cows. What on earth makes anyone think that human beings feel less than cows? Western entitlement and capitalist values of commodification, that's what! A society that has lost empathy for its own young due to the massive rise in adoption ideology in the baby scoop era: that babies can be taken with little or no damage to them. This is an utter falsehood.

The global campaign against all forms of surrogacy has managed to unite many well-known religious and secular feminists and human rights advocates, despite obvious ideological differences. That is because there is nothing good about surrogacy, most especially for the person created for it.

The only way to deal with it is to abolish it entirely. You do not have legalised slavery because it "still goes on" and you fear there will be a black market in it. And studies show that illegal surrogacy is greater in countries where some forms of surrogacy are legal such as Australia. We have the highest rate of illegal use of overseas surrogacy BECAUSE we have legalised 'altruistic' surrogacy. Countries where all surrogacy is illegal have virtually no illegal surrogacy because people recognise it for what it is: a human rights abuse.

The same logic for making slavery illegal goes for surrogacy: it is intrinsically unethical. It is the deliberate creation of people for baby trade - in all cases - and it makes me, personally, absolutely sick to watch its promotion by people who otherwise appear to be kind and upstanding citizens of this country. What on earth were those National Apologies to us for if we don't learn from them and we don't listen to those to whom the apologies were given? Meaningless symbols.

When they are born, babies want nothing but their mummies. Babies know nothing but that their mummies at birth are the women who have been carrying them in their wombs. To take them from her is cruel. Is this really so hard to see?

Please do not insult common decency and keep any form of this practice legal.