Are you my mother?

Identity issues related to

- adoption
- intercountry adoption
- donor conception
- surrogacy
Coleen Clare
Manager, VANISH Inc.

For 25 years VANISH, Victorian Adoption Network for Information and Self Help has supported:
mothers, fathers, daughters, sons and families separated from each other by adoption and; latterly by donor conception
This paper looks at:

- No ‘right to parent’
- ‘Rights of a child’ not to be separated from their parent/s
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Ethics
- Victorian legislation
- Adoption and Permanent Care
- Identity issues
- Donor conception and Surrogacy
- Questions for practice
• An estimated 250,000 adoptions took place between 1950 and 1975. The mothers who had their babies taken were unmarried and often told not to reveal their story.
Lifelong Problems

- Loss, grief and trauma
- Unknown, complex, confused identity
- Unsure of ethnic origin/s, loss of culture, loss of country
- Loss of child, mother, father, donor, extended family, genetic history
• Unknown character of mother, child, father, family and donors

• No knowledge of the fate of mother, child, father, family and donors

• Fear of worthlessness, not ‘measuring up’, feelings of shame and loss of confidence
Fear of being ‘chosen’ or ‘designed’, fear of health history

Fear of exploitation of mother, egg, donor, birth/surrogate mother

Trying constantly to please others – or giving up on pleasing anyone
- Difficulty with relationships – fear of being unwanted or ‘left’; leaving first …

- Nagging feelings - I was never asked whether I wanted to be born and grow up ‘this way’.
Questions

We recommend the following questions to assist with ethical and principled decision making.
Is adoption, donor conception, or surrogacy in the best interests of the child and the adult they will become?
Will the child and the adult they will become, know all the elements of their genetic history: mother, father, eggs, sperm, surrogate/mother/s, siblings, and relatives?
Will the child and the adult they will become, meet and maintain contact with all those who have birthed, provided genetic material or carried them?
Will the child and the adult they will become, have a full and complete medical history?
Will the child and the adult they will become, be disadvantaged by this birth process?
• Will the child and the adult they will become, suffer any racism or cultural confusion from lack of knowledge of ethnic identity or connection with culture?
- How will the child and the adult they will become, feel about the sums of money that have changed hands: will they feel bought or designed?
What ongoing expert support will be available to them, throughout life, to answer these questions and others as they arise?