

q feature: GROWING FAMILIES

Gay Singles & Couples Creating Families In the Covid Era

Last year, over 86 infants were born via surrogacy here in Australia, over a third of them to gay couples and singles – that’s an enormous increase on just two years prior. At least double that number were born to Australians using offshore surrogacy. For those engaging in domestic surrogacy, many have been working with surrogates in other states. This has meant hundreds have had to navigate compassionate travel arrangements to be present at the birth of their child since Australia’s domestic and international travel lockdowns came into play.

I’ve counted 34 gay couples and singles using offshore programs who I have assisted in the last six months alone – most of them welcoming newborns in the US or Canada, though there have also been births to gay Aussies in Colombia, Mexico and Cyprus. Some countries closed their borders to foreigners for months – baby or no baby. Others closed their passports offices. Then Australia introduced tiny quotas on arriving passengers. Such challenges have seen the non-profit Growing Families dealing daily with airlines, government departments and anxious parents to be.

On my wall at work I have a collage of at least twenty newborns united with their parents. For while Covid-19 put a halt to much of the service and travel we once took for granted, babies in utero kept coming.

Joe Mauri was unable to travel to the US for the birth of his son. Instead he looked after all the paperwork from Melbourne while his partner Adam travelled and spent months caring for their newborn Jean-Pierre.

Phil & Jeff are a Melbourne couple who engaged with one of California’s most popular IVF clinics, San Diego Fertility Center. Dr Said Daneshmand helped them create embryos and they worked with a Californian surrogate.

Their successful transfer was in November last year, well before Covid hit, meaning they were expecting to be parents by mid August this year.

Travelling to the US at this time was nerve-wracking to say the least. They made sure to arrive over two weeks before the due date. However timelines to obtain a US passport for a newborn had blown out from two weeks to two months. Further, visitor visas were not being granted in US passports.

When their son Brandon was born on 20 August, just one of them was allowed in the hospital for the birth - the other had to settle for being there via FaceTime.

Phil & Jeff were able to collect baby Brandon’s birth certificate within three days. (One benefit of the birth being in California - a court had declared them legally Brandon’s parents months prior to birth).

Instead of a US passport, they started applying for Australian citizenship as soon as they had the birth certificate. Reams of documents needed to be prepared and uploaded online for Australia’s Department of Home Affairs to assess.

Once they had uploaded the correct paperwork, Citizenship approval was quick. It was a relief to find this process ‘fairly seamless’ Phil admits.

The next hurdle was an emergency passport – and here the Australian Consulate in San Francisco assisted. Two days after an in-person appointment, a passport had been approved.

Thirty four days post birth, this new family was in Sydney quarantine – assigned an apartment with a kitchen and laundry. They brought plenty of baby essentials from the US and friends delivered care packages.



Despite having to deal with a myriad of officials in their US hospital, and government departments across two countries, Phil admits that there were few hiccups.

Phil admits that an extra month or two overseas was a small price to pay. 'We love being dads and are completely in love with our newborn son. We've wanted to be parents for a long time and being able to fulfil this dream has been a wonderful experience'.



Growing Families Australian conference, originally scheduled for Brisbane last June, will now involve online webinars spread across three days 14 – 22 November. It will share the perspectives of parents, surrogates, donors, counsellors, as well as global experts in IVF and surrogate recruitment and support. Saturday 14 November will be devoted to domestic donor and surrogacy options and 21/22 November will focus on international programs from a medical, legal and psychological standpoint. If you are considering building family, don't miss the chance to learn from others who have gone before you.

Full details at <https://www.growingfamilies.org/2020-conference-and-event-schedule>

A collage of images showing families and people in professional settings, used as a background for the event banner. The images include a family of four (mother, father, and two children), a woman holding a baby, a man and woman looking at a baby, a man and woman sitting at a desk with a computer, and a group of people in a meeting.

Donor & Surrogacy Education

14 - 22 NOVEMBER 2020

AUSTRALIAN OPTIONS WEBINAR	14 NOV
INTERNATIONAL OPTIONS PART 1 SEMINAR / WEBINAR	21 NOV
INTERNATIONAL OPTIONS PART 2 WEBINAR	22 NOV

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