
MY PARTNER CHRIS AND I ARE NOT BLESSED with the anatomy in order to conceive a child naturally. This, however, no way reduced our desire to have a family.

Due to Chris' desire to have a child of his own blood, we had investigated surrogacy programs in Canada and the United States. Although Western Australian couples can undertake commercial surrogacy, we quickly found out it was financially out of our reach. Each attempt cost anywhere between \$50,000 and \$150,000, with no guarantee of success.

Without talking to the other about it, we both took a second look at surrogacy options while Chris was on deployment between June and December 2009. A segment on the 60 Minutes program caught my eye. They were interviewing a gay couple from Melbourne who had successfully completed a surrogacy program in India. Honestly, what was most interesting was the fact the process was significantly cheaper and, whilst there was still no guarantee of success, if unsuccessful we could afford to try again.

Before I had said anything, I sent him a care package that had a couple of baby magazines and a superman teddy, and I am sure he must have been thinking, "What the??"

After many discussions between Chris and I via email, we agreed that India was a possible solution. I contacted the couple from the 60 Minute interview, Trevor and Peter, to start collecting information about the finer details.

After choosing a donor and making a payment, the next step was for Chris to undertake health checks. The Navy was happy to provide this initial assessment, however we were advised that the remainder of the cost for the program was at our expense as the Federal Government does not support commercial surrogacy.



Within 24 hours, he had 70 emails of support.
That blew us away.

When everything came back clear, Chris flew to New Delhi to make his “deposit” and meet the doctor responsible for the program at Phoenix Hospital. This occurred in April 2010 and he had to request a Navy security clearance for India. Initially he was hesitant about the reaction he would receive from the Chain of Command noting the social connotations that parts of the community have to same-sex couples having children and commercial surrogacy.

Chris was posted on board HMAS Toowoomba when he made a trip. He was pleasantly surprised by how supportive and excited my Executive Officer was. He was nearly more excited than Chris at one point. He clearly understood our joy as he has two young children himself.

Chris flew to India to meet the Surrogate and gain a better understanding of the Hospital and the program. There was a stigma attached to using a centre in India because it was cheaper and we wanted to make sure no one was being taken advantage of. It was very important to us to see where the Surrogates lived during the pregnancy and that is was all above board. We were pleased to find out they had access to a doctor, cook and driver plus the money was enough to put their own children through school and buy a house for the family.

He was pleasantly surprised with what he saw and it gave us confidence in not only handing over so much money, but in our belief this was the real deal and I could possible end up with the family we so dearly desired.

Chris wanted to let other gay and lesbian couples within Defence know that having kids by surrogacy was an option if they want to go that path in the future so I wrote an article for the Defence Gay and Lesbian Information Service (DEFGLIS) newsletter, which was published in September 2010. Within 24 hours, he had 70 emails of support. That blew us away.



When the Surrogate was between 6 and 8 weeks pregnant, to our great surprise, the ultrasound revealed twins.

I had always wanted twins. But Chris had a very different reaction. He was thinking, “How are we going to do this?” He was worried about finances and child care when we both returned to work. He is the type of person who thinks ten steps ahead rather than what is going on right now. Once we came up with a solution to those practical matters it was easier for Chris to be excited.

After a long discussion, my parents agreed to move over from the East Coast to assist in looking after them when we returned to work. As my parents are pensioners, we agreed to subsidise their rent in exchange for them being on-demand baby sitters. I felt more comfortable returning to work knowing my own parents would be looking after them and we could tell they were just as excited to be involved in their future grandkids’ upbringing.

After following regular updates on the progress of the pregnancy from the centre, Chris called me at about 2.30 pm on 6 December to tell me they were going to be born the next day via caesarean due to complications with the Surrogate. I had just been handed an exam paper for a course I was on at work. Needless to say it took me about ten minutes to complete the exam, and I told the instructor I had to leave. I didn’t even wait around to see if I had passed or not. I went back to work and told my supervisor that I was taking a month off, starting that day.

Our twins Makayla and Declan were born on 7 December 2010. Makayla was first out, weighing 1.5 kilograms and Declan was 2.1 kilograms.

We left Australia on 8 December and flew to New Delhi. They were about 36 hours old by the time we got there. Dr Shivani sent us through

ABOVE

Paul and Chris with twins
Makayla and Declan.



I would like to say it will be easy but I'm not sure what it will be like with two kids.

The Defence Gay and Lesbian Information Service (DEFGLIS) is an organisation of Regular, Reserve and Civilian members of the Australian Defence Organisation who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex and transgender and allies. The DEFGLIS website provides information on; gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, intersex and transgender issues for members, divisional staff and management staff of the ADO.

Chris is the West Australian Co-ordinator for DEFGLIS. Visit www.defglis.com.au.

photos of the babies soon after birth and we also had contact with her assistants via email and Facebook.

Prior to the birth, Chris had a DNA test in Australia. After the babies were born, they also underwent a DNA test. After a genetic link is established, the babies get Australian Citizenship by descent and are allowed back into Australia. Funny enough, they are also entitled to the baby bonus and family benefits payments.

Chris managed to take 7 months leave from the Navy before returning to a shore job in Perth. I also took a month's leave from my full-time job working in a Defence Industry job. The best thing about having twins is that we were blessed and ended up with one boy and one girl. However any combination would have been just as good. Our only real hopes were happy and healthy babies.

The hardest thing is getting used to having a five-minute trip to the shops now taking hours. One of our early lessons was to put a cover over the pram so people couldn't see the babies – this sped things up a bit.

Chris may be posted to another ship in the future. Having had 8 years in the Navy myself, with one deployment myself and one deployment as a partner, I would like to say it will be easy but I'm not sure what it will be like with two kids. Time will tell.

