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'I yearned for a daughter'

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GIRL POWER: Jodi McMahon loves her boys but yearned for daughters.

Jodi McMahon yearned for a daughter. The feeling intensified with each of her seven boy pregnancies, but it was never about princess dresses over footy socks.

"It was a longing for that relationship when you're 50 and she's 20, that mother-daughter relationship," she says. "That's what I was scared I was going to miss out on."

The 39-year-old from Australia tried all the natural methods said to produce a girl - the timing of intercourse, specific sex positions and following a high-calcium, no-salt diet. When boy number six arrived she was devastated.

"It wasn't because he was a boy, it was just that I had tried so hard and believed it would work," Mrs McMahon says.

In August 2010, Jodi and her husband Andrew travelled to a Los Angeles clinic where they were lucky enough to get pregnant on their first attempt with Addison. They froze another female embryo and returned last year to conceive Evie, spending A\$40,000 to get the two girls.

"I didn't want to be sitting in my rocking chair in my 80s saying I should have tried it," says Mrs McMahon, who now has eight children (one boy twin died) aged between six months and 19 years.

One in 10 IVF cycles performed in the US are done for gender selection, and about half of those are for patients from overseas, says US gender selection specialist Daniel Potter. Eighty-five per cent of the Australians Dr Potter sees want girls.

Dr Potter argues gender selection is a "reproductive freedom issue" for women like abortion. Yet critics say permitting sex selection for social reasons is a slippery slope to designer babies.

- Essential Baby

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