



Birth Certificate Content Review

New South Wales Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages

2014

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Executive Summary

The New South Wales Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages (“the Registry”) is reviewing the content of birth certificates. Birth certificates have appeared in their current format (Appendix 1) for many decades, with only minor changes to content during that time. This review is being undertaken for the following reasons:

- Changes in how birth certificates are used
- In consideration of how birth certificates can best reflect the changing composition of families in Australia
- In response to recommendations of the Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiry into the Commonwealth’s role in former adoption policies and practices.¹

A birth certificate is used to establish identity and enable individuals to establish their rights and discharge their obligations in respect of services provided by the government and private sectors. A birth certificate can also establish part of a person’s genetic and family history.

Birth registration details are recorded in accordance with the *Births, Deaths and Marriage Registration Regulation 2011* (‘the Regulations’) (Appendix 6), and birth certificates are issued under section 49 of the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995* (‘the BDMR Act’). Any amendments to the Regulations or the BDMR Act were considered to be outside the scope of this review. Rather, the review was concerned with changes to the content of birth certificates that can be implemented within the current legislative framework.

In May 2012, a notice calling for submissions was placed on the Registry’s website and the Registrar wrote to key stakeholders advising them of the review and inviting submissions. Submissions were sought from various state and federal government agencies, not for profit organisations, members of the legal and medical professions, members of the community, law enforcement agencies and other interested parties. A list of those invited to make submissions is at Appendix 2 and a list of those who made submissions is at Appendix 3.

The most common issues raised in submission related to:

- Adoptions
- Indigenous status
- Donor details
- Proof of identity
- Citizenship
- Family research.

Some submissions endorsed the current content of birth certificates. Several parties suggested that certain information appearing on birth certificates is no longer relevant, such as the marriage details and occupations of the person’s parents. Other submissions suggested that additional data be included on birth certificates, such as donor details, time of birth, all parents of a child (both adoptive and birth parents on the same certificate), parent’s full dates of birth, the full names/places of birth/dates of birth of younger and older half/full siblings, linking child/parent/sibling birth and death records, indigenous status, citizenship and/or cultural background of parents.

¹ Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs, *Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices* (February 2012)