

Fee waived birth certificates for people facing disadvantage

There are several ways people can access free birth certificates:

- Legal Aid NSW has a Memorandum of Understanding with the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages providing an allocation of free birth certificates for eligible people. More information about that initiative is [here](#).
- Corrective Services NSW has a program providing free birth certificates.
- The Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages in most states have a fee-waiver policy.

This factsheet has information about the Corrective Services program (below) and the fee waiver policies of [the Australian Capital Territory \(ACT\)](#), [New South Wales](#), [Queensland](#), [South Australia](#) and [Victoria](#). It also includes a [template support letter](#) that can be used for applications for fee waiver in NSW.

Corrective Services NSW

People who are in prison in NSW are eligible to apply for a free birth certificate if they:

- Are exiting CSNSW custody within six (6) weeks to six (6) months, and
- Were born in NSW, and
- Meet the criteria of a 'vulnerable person'.

To be considered a 'vulnerable person', an inmate must:

- Be in financial hardship (less than \$500 in their inmate account), and
- Satisfy one or more of the following factors:
 - Be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
 - Be at risk of homelessness on release from prison.
 - Have a confirmed disability or be a NDIS customer.
 - Have low literacy skills or are unable to read.
 - Be under 25 years of age; or over 65 years of age.

Inmates can identify themselves as eligible. To do this they will need a printout of their individual trust account to verify financial hardship. Secondly, an inmate may be identified via the eligible candidates list. Offender Services and Programs generate an automated weekly report, listing inmates who are considered vulnerable and eligible for free ID under the Program. This can be used to assist in identifying and/or confirming inmate eligibility for the Program. The eligibility list carries a current trust account balance that can be used to verify the financial hardship criteria for all inmates.

Once established, an eligible inmate is provided with a Form 38 - Application for Birth Certificate - Vulnerable Inmate - and a Services and Programs Officer (SAPO) can assist in completing this.

Australian Capital Territory

The [fee waiver policy](#) says if the applicant is experiencing financial hardship and need a birth certificate as proof of identity to receive immediate services, they can request a financial hardship fee waiver.

Some examples of circumstances for requesting a financial hardship fee-waiver include:

- A person cannot afford the certificate fee and urgently requires a birth certificate for proof of identity to apply for income support payments, housing or employment.
- For safety reasons upon seeking refuge from a volatile domestic or family setting, where proof of identity is required to urgently access financial services such as bank accounts.

How to make an application

- Complete the [Fee Waiver application](#) form which includes the application for a certificate.
- Attach the evidence of the applicant's circumstances (see the information on the application [form](#) for examples of evidence required).
- Send your application to bdm@act.gov.au or submit in person at an Access Canberra Service Centre.

Where to send the application

Access Canberra
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

Cultural support to get a birth certificate

If you're an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, an approved community representative can support your application for a birth certificate if:

- you do not have the proof of identity documents you need to apply
- you need a birth certificate for a child you look after, but you're not a parent named on the child's certificate.

To get help to support your application, you can contact either:

one of the approved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives (see [here](#) for the list) or email bdm@act.gov.au

New South Wales

NSW's [Fee Waiver Policy](#) states that the fee for a birth certificate may be waived for vulnerable people.

'Vulnerable people' includes:

- Anyone who is currently a victim of, and/or directly impacted by domestic violence.
- A person of any age who is sleeping rough, including those who are homeless due to circumstances beyond their control.
- Children under 18 years of age, who are currently living in poverty or just above the poverty line.
- Those suffering long term chronic debilitating illnesses.
- People who suffered personal disasters, e.g., house fire resulting in total destruction of all personal property, within six months of the event occurring.

- Unregistered persons in prison.

How to make an application

- Complete and print the [form](#) (can be done electronically), leaving payment section blank. It may be best to use the address of a service or case worker if the applicant is living transiently or currently homeless.
- Complete a supporting letter describing how the person's circumstances meet BDM's definition of 'vulnerable (use the template support letter in [Annexure 1](#)).
- Obtain clear colour photocopies/photos of at least 2 forms of ID from the applicant.

What ID to include

Applicants must provide at least 3 forms of current ID (not expired). The best forms of ID are:

- Driver licence.
- Photo ID or proof of age card.
- Medicare card, Centrelink card or statement. Centrelink and Medicare will sometimes print statements for people noting their identity if they are receiving support, but don't currently have a card.
- Bank card,* tertiary or school ID card.
- Health care card.
- Recent utility bill with current address.

**For bank cards, it is sufficient, and safer, to simply state that you have 'sighted' the bank card as a form of ID on the form, noting the bank, type of card and expiry date. Do not photograph the card or include the card numbers.*

If an applicant has limited ID/no photo ID, include as much of the following information as possible in the support letter:

- The names and birthdays of all their siblings.
- What hospital the applicant was born at.
- Where their parents were born.
- If their parents were married, the year they married and where they lived when they were married.
- Where their parents were living when the applicant was born.
- If their mother and father were working when they were born, the jobs that they were doing.

Where to send the application

NSW Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages / Client Services
GPO Box 30
Sydney NSW 2001

Queensland

The [QLD Registry's fee waiver policy](#) says: *if you are suffering financial hardship and have an immediate need for a certificate, you may be able to have your application fee waived.* It includes examples like a child, whose parents are in financial hardship, needing a birth certificate to enrol in school or someone in financial hardship needing to prove their identity who is a victim of family or domestic violence. Needing a certificate to obtain housing, Centrelink, access income or employment could also qualify.

How to make an application

- Information about how to apply is [here](#). The application process can be done online or offline.
- Offline option: print and complete the [form](#).

- Whether the application is done online or offline, the applicant needs:
 - [Evidence of financial hardship](#).
 - [Evidence of immediate need](#).
 - [Proof of ID](#)

Where to send the application

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
PO Box 15188,
CITY EAST QLD 4002

South Australia

[Births, Deaths and Marriages in South Australia](#) assesses applications for a fee waiver on a case-by-case basis, there is no separate form.

How to make an application

- Print and complete the [application form](#) or apply [directly online](#), but leave the payment section blank.
- Include a brief cover letter explaining why the applicant should be considered for a fee waiver (i.e they are reliant on Centrelink or have no income, they are experiencing homelessness, they are experiencing family or domestic violence, they are reliant upon your service for accommodation, they are engaged with your service for x,y.z services).
- Include some evidence of financial hardship like a copy of their Centrelink card or general information about their circumstances.

Where to send the application

Births, Deaths and Marriages
Consumer and Business Services
GPO Box 1351
Adelaide SA 5001

Victoria

Victorian BDM has a [fee waiver policy](#), a [factsheet](#) for organisations supporting people facing disadvantage, and a [factsheet](#) for specialist homelessness services who are helping people to apply for a free birth certificate. There is also a dedicated email address for help with fee waiver applications: bdmapplicationmanagement@justice.vic.gov.au. In the subject line, mention 'assisting a client who is experiencing disadvantage.'

How to make an application

Online application

The fastest way to apply for a certificate is online. If this is not an option, see below for the offline option. To request a fee waiver with your online certificate application:

- Follow the instructions on the [factsheet](#). Please note: Instead of paying the application fee (and then waiting for a refund), select BPAY as the payment option.

- Print and complete the fee waiver form for [child](#) and/or [adult](#), then sign and upload it to your online application.
- Call BDM to advise them the fee waiver form has been uploaded with the unpaid application: 1300 369 367

Paper (offline) application

- Print and complete the certificate application [form](#)
- Print and complete the fee waiver form for [child](#) or [adult](#)
- No payment is required to submit the application.

Where to send the application

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria
GPO Box 4332
Melbourne VIC 3001

Cultural support to get a birth certificate

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not need to prove financial hardship. Paper fee-waiver applications (scanned) can be emailed directly to bdm.koori@justice.vic.gov.au

Victorian-born Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remand or prison can also access their certificates for free. BDM work with prisons to complete this, however here is the prisoner [fee waiver form](#) for reference.

Annexure 1 NSW template support letter

[On your community service's letter head]

NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages
GPO Box 30
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Births Deaths & Marriages,

Application for birth certificate with fee waiver

Full name: *[insert]*

DOB: *[insert]*

Address: *[insert]*

We are assisting *[NAME]* who we confirm was born in New South Wales. Our service assists people who *[insert description of your service]*

We enclose:

1. Birth Certificate Application signed by *[NAME]*; and
2. Copies of identification *[three types – give reasons if there are not three types available – may or may not be accepted]*

Application for fee waiver

We refer to the Fee Waiver Policy issued by Births Deaths & Marriages on 04 December 2022.

[Insert detailed description of client circumstances:

- *Why are they vulnerable?*
- *Recent release from correctional facility or financial hardship alone are not enough]*

We therefore request a fee waiver because *[NAME]*:

- is a vulnerable person (Clause 4.6 of the Fee Waiver Policy); OR
- is eligible due to his/her circumstances *[NB: can argue Compassionate Grounds]*

Please contact our office on *[PHONE]* or *[EMAIL]* if there are any issues with this request. We otherwise note the processing time for a fee waiver application is 15 working days.

Yours sincerely,

[NAME]