***Survey of Birth Registration Processes and Mechanisms in Australia***

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| 1. **Please indicate the current status of the right to birth registration in your country’s legal framework.** | | | |
| ***Jurisdiction*** | | ***Registration Authority*** | |
|  | | *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995*  [**s 16**](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/bdamra1995383/s16.html)  **Obligation to have birth registered** | |
| ***New South Wales*** | | *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996*  [**s 18**](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/bdamra1996383/s18.html)  **Obligation to have birth registered** | |
| ***Victoria*** | | *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2003*  [**s 6**](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/qld/consol_act/bdamra2003383/s6.html)  **Births that must be registered in Queensland** | |
| ***Queensland*** | | *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1998*  [**s 16**](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/wa/consol_act/bdamra1998383/s16.html)  **Obligation to have birth registered** | |
| ***Western Australia*** | | *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996*  [**s 16**](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/sa/consol_act/bdamra1996383/s16.html)  **Obligation to have birth registered** | |
| ***South Australia*** | | *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1999*  [**s 15**](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/consol_act/bdamra1999383/s15.html)  **Obligation to have birth registered** | |
| ***Tasmania*** | | *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1997*  [**s 10**](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/act/consol_act/bdamra1997383/s10.html)  **Obligation to have birth registered** | |
| ***Australian Capital Territory*** | | *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1997*  [**s 16**](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nt/consol_act/bdamra383/s16.html)  **Obligation to have birth registered** | |
| *Notes*  While the above provisions do not stipulate a *right* to birth registration, they do impose an obligation to register births.  Registration of Births is a function of State (in UN terms, ”provincial” or “regional”) government rather than central government, while welfare payments are the responsibility of the central government. Birth registration is not a legal requirement for welfare assistance, although establishing proof of identity (to prevent fraud) is. In practice, a native born person whose birth was not registered may have, depending on circumstances, more difficulty providing proof of identity but this is rarely a major barrier to payment.  Education and health services are also provided mainly by regional governments, although often with central government funding. There is legal requirement by any of these governments for birth registration to access these, although again establishing citizenship or residency status may be more difficult in the absence of birth documentation. | | | |
| 1. **Please provide data on birth registration, including by gender, age (under 5 and above) and according to urban and rural areas, if available.** | | | |
| The Australian Bureau of Statistics Birth Registrations collection includes all births that occurred and were registered in Australia, including births to mothers whose place of usual residence was overseas.[[1]](#endnote-1)  ABS data tables with information and statistics pertaining to gender, age and rural/remote/urban location (by year and State/Territory up to 2011) can be found [here](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3301.02011?OpenDocument).  Births for 2012 have recently been released onto the ABS website (<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3301.02012?OpenDocument>). This contains the latest data on Births in Australia. There is data available to download that may be of use such as:   * Table 1: Births, Summary, States and territories----2002 to 2012 * Table 5: Births, Summary are downloads for a breakdown on age and sex including remoteness. * Table 7: Births, Year and month of occurrence, States and territories--2001 to 2012  |  | | --- | |  |   Births registration information received by the ABS may not contain all births registered in the 2012 calendar year i.e. the ABS receives data according to certain scope rules (these can be located in the explanatory notes of the publication).  ABS produces birth statistics based on a reference year which is currently calendar year. The following table provides a breakdown of births by Reference Year 2012 by Registration Year and Year of Occurrence.   |  | | --- | | cid:1__=C5BBF68EDF8DF85B8f9e8a93df938@abs.gov.au | | | | |
| cid:2__=C5BBF68EDF8DF85B8f9e8a93df938@abs.gov.au | | | |
| 1. **Please indicate what authorities are in charge of registering births, deaths and marriages.[[2]](#endnote-2)** | | | |
| ***Jurisdiction*** | ***Registration Authority*** | |
| ***New South Wales*** | [Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages (NSW)](http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/) –  Registers life events including the registration of births, deaths and marriages and official changes of name and sex. The Registry also provides free access to their unrestricted birth, death and marriage family history indexes. | |
| ***Victoria*** | <http://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/> -  The Victorian Registry provides information about registering Victorian births, deaths, marriages and name changes; proof of identity; applying for certificates; search your family history records; and search a facility for popular given names. | |
| ***Queensland*** | [Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (QLD)](http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/justice-services/births-deaths-and-marriages) –  The Queensland Registry keeps records of all births deaths and marriages that have occurred in the State since 1 January 1890. The Registry also performs civil marriage ceremonies. | |
| ***Western Australia*** | [Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages (WA)](http://www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au/) –  The Registry creates and permanently stores birth, death and marriage records for life events occurring in Western Australia and performs civil marriages in the Perth Registry office. | |
| ***South Australia*** | [Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Office (SA)](http://www.cbs.sa.gov.au/wcm/births-deaths-marriages-2/) –  The Registration Office provides services relating to the registration of births, deaths, marriages, changes of name, adoption of children and reassignments of sex that occur in South Australia. | |
| ***Tasmania*** | [Tasmanian Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages](http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/bdm) –  The Tasmanian Registry is responsible for maintaining registers of births, deaths, marriages, deeds of relationship and adoptions that occur in Tasmania, registering changes of name of people who were born outside Tasmania and registering changes of sex for people whose birth is registered in Tasmania. | |
| ***Australian Capital Territory*** | [Office of Regulatory Services (ACT)](http://www.ors.act.gov.au/community/births_deaths_and_marriages) –  The Office of Regulatory Services is responsible for the registration of births, deaths, marriages, changes of name, changes of sex, adoptions and deaths abroad, and provision of certificates of registrations to authorised applicants. | |
| ***Northern Territory*** | [Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (NT)](http://www.nt.gov.au/justice/bdm/index.shtml) –  The Registry records all births, deaths, marriages and changes of name occurring the Northern Territory. | |
| *Please indicate what information is included in birth certificates issued in your country.*  The following criteria is consistent across all State and Territory jurisdictions in Australia for Birth Certificates:   * **Child’s POI:** Family Name; Given Name(s); Sex; Date of Birth; Place of Birth; * **Mother’s POI:** Family Name; Maiden Name; Given Name(s); Occupation; Age or year/date of birth; Place of Birth * **Father’s POI:** Family Name; Given Name(s); Occupation; Age or year/date of birth; Place of Birth * **Marriage of Parents:** Date of Marriage; Place of Marriage * **Previous Children in the Relationship: Given names, sex and date of birth** * **Informant(s):** Name; Address (not printed on Tasmanian or South Australian birth certificates) * **Registering Authority:** Title or Name; Date * **Endorsements:** Name; Date | | | |
| *Does your country have a mechanism in place mandated with the coordination of all actors engaged in/responsible for civil registration?*  Each Australian State and Territory is responsible for civil registration, through the respective Births, Deaths and Marriages Authorities | | | |
| 1. **Please provide programmes undertaken by your Government to improve the rates of birth registration and to ensure the awareness of the importance of birth registration in the whole territory.** | | | |
| *Please also specify whether such programmes are carried out in a systematic manner and, if so, with which regularity.*  The rate of registration is very high. Nationally, health agencies record the fact of a birth through linkages to hospital birth processes.  At the State and Territory level, the vast majority of births are being formally registered with the respective Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) within a child’s first year of life.  This rate of registration is improved by further engagement with social welfare, medical and early education services.  The time elapsed between the fact of a birth and the formal registration of that birth with the relevant BDM registry can present as ‘lag’ in a small number of birth registrations.  Australian BDM Registries regularly undertake programmes to improve the timeliness of registration in remote indigenous communities such as, Victoria’s **Indigenous Access Program** which visits regional centres and remote communities to promote access to birth certification. These programmes often partner with other service providers such as health and social services agencies, as part of broader federal and state joint efforts to better coordinate community outreach.  The BDM Registries in the jurisdictions with the largest numbers of remote communities (WA, NT, Qld, Vic, and NSW) all liaise with other government agencies, local government and community bodies to run these programmes. For example, under the NSW BDM’s **Who You Are, Where You From** programme, the registry coordinated activities with other NSW government agencies and regional local governments as part of the NSW **Aboriginal Access Project**.  Likewise, the WA, NT and QLD BDM Registries have all coordinated field trips with local community organisations, partnering with government departments (health, education, employment etc.) and local councils with the aim of specifically targeting the registration of new births and unregistered births.  BDM Registries often have dedicated staff coordinating efforts with other government departments and serving as a contact point for Indigenous communities. The A.C.T.’s **Office of Regulatory Services** regularly needs to work other BDM Registries to facilitate the issuance of birth certificates as a large number of the ACT’s indigenous people in the are born elsewhere in Australia.  Outreach programmes will often include discounted or free birth certification for example the A.C.T.’s **Office of Regulatory Services** waives fees for issuing birth certificates for Indigenous Australians who have never had a birth certificate, Victoria BDM’s **Indigenous Access Fund** which meets the full cost of birth and other certificates for Indigenous Australians on low incomes or NSW BDM’s **Aboriginal Access Project** which discounts the cost of certificates. | | | |
| 1. **Do children in your country need to be registered and/or have proof of identity to access education, health services and other services?** | | | |
| *Please elaborate.*  Under Australian Family Assistance and Paid Parental Leave legislation the Department of Human Services makes Newborn Supplement, Baby Bonus, or Paid Parental Leave payments to those customers who declare they have either applied to register the child’s birth or who have registered the child’s birth with the relevant State or Territory jurisdiction.  This requirement is placed upon all Australian citizens who apply for financial assistance through these payments. Claimants who indicate that they have not registered or applied to register the birth of their child are not eligible for Newborn Supplement, Baby Bonus or Paid Parental Leave payments.  In addition to the birth registration requirement, a claimant is also required to provide proof that the child was born or adopted. This can be done by providing a copy of the birth certificate received from State and Territory jurisdictions following birth registration, or through a claim form which the claimant receives in hospital. This form includes a proof of birth certification completed by the attending doctor or midwife. It also requires the customer to declare they have applied to register the child’s birth. The Department of Human Services then processes the claim.  Access to Commonwealth Government parental payments is subject to a birth registration requirement to help increase birth registrations and improve the collection of births data.  The birth verification requirement for the Baby Bonus and Parental Leave Pay are that the parent or carer lodges their proof of birth form (provided by the hospital or midwife) and indicates on the form that they have registered, or taken action to register, the birth. This requirement will also apply to the Newborn Supplement component of Family Tax Benefit Part A, which replaces the Baby Bonus in March 2014.  States and territory governments are responsible for the registration of births, deaths and marriage. State and territory governments have arrangements in place to help support parents to register the birth of their child. For example, Victoria has arrangements to exempt fees for Indigenous parents applying for a birth certificate. The New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages has an Indigenous Access Program, which includes regular attendance at information days at various centres around the state to increase birth registration and assist Indigenous Australians to apply for birth certificates.  **Education Services**   * *Examples:*   + A birth certificate is required to enrol a child in a NSW Government preschool.[[3]](#endnote-3)   + A child’s **birth certificate** is required by Australian schools in applying to enrol in an educational institution.   + The **birth certificate** is the primary form of identification for most children (especially those who are not yet eligible to apply for a driver’s licence).   **Health Services**   * *Examples - Medicare:*   + To register a newborn baby for Medicare (i.e. to add the child to the parent’s Medicare card), the hospital will provide *Newborn Child Claim for Family Assistance and Medicare Form* and will assist the parents to fill out this form. Completed forms can be lodged at a local DHS Service Centre or by mail.   + If, however, your baby is over 52 weeks old, the parents will need to lodge a *Medicare Application Form* and supply a birth certificate.[[4]](#endnote-4) | | | |
| 1. **Has your government benefitted (or is benefitting) from setting up new, and/or strengthening the functionality of existing birth registration and civil registration and vital statistics systems?** | | | |
| *If so, please briefly indicate in which activity/sector/area of work and whether this has been done to address a specific barrier to birth registration and civil registration.*  All BDM Registries are currently working collectively with ABS to improve the quality and collection of birth data. A number of Registries, such as the WA BDM are also examining ways to increase the accessibility of birth registration information. This includes the piloting of online birth registration systems developed to reduce disincentives for the birth registration process.  This mirrors a broader process across government in Australia where key government services are migrating to the online environment (see below).  The ABS has a strong collaborative relationship with Registries in all jurisdictions.  A co-ordinating committee, co-chaired by the ABS and one of the Registrars, has just recently been created that brings together key partners responsible for the management of Australia's civil registration and vital statistics production system. ABS will provide the secretariat for the next 12 months and will assist with strategies to improve understanding of the national minimum dataset for births, deaths and causes of deaths and identify key areas for improving coordination/integration, harmonisation and communication between key stakeholders across Australia. | | | |
| 1. **Does your country have a National Strategy in place to improve civil registration systems with technical, financial and human resources allocated?** | | | |
| *If so, please specify the resources available each year.*  **National Identity Security Strategy**  In April 2007, Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed an intergovernmental Agreement to a *National Identity Security Strategy* (NISS), developed to provide a framework of policies and standards to strengthen the enrolment and registration being undertaken by Australian government agencies. Renewed by COAG in 2012, the revised NISS is addressing future identity security challenges and opportunities, including those posed by the online environment and the role of identity crime as a key enabler of serious organised crime.  Key to this will be the new ID Proofing Standards (currently in DRAFT form) which will outline benchmarks/better practice requirements for identity proofing and verification (the processes undertaken to confirm a person’s claimed identity).  *Document Verification Service (DVS)*[[5]](#endnote-5)  The DVS is a key element of the *National Identity Security Strategy*. The service is an on-line system which can be used to check, in real time, if a person applying for a high-value benefit or service has provided a proof-of-identity document that is accurate and up-to-date.  The DVS is a secure, online service that provides real time matching or verification of information on key evidence of identity documents (e.g. passports, driver licences, Medicare cards, as well as birth, marriage and change-of-name certification) against the records of the document’s issuing agency. It draws together Commonwealth and State/Territory agencies that issue credentials used by the community for identity purposes to permit the authenticity of these credentials to be verified. It is used by around 12 Commonwealth and state agencies to verify documents issued by 19 agencies.  Together with related initiatives, the DVS can be a key enabler of the government’s Policy for E-Government and Digital Economy. This includes commitments to move to bulk of government services online by 2017, with the government to provide national leadership in promoting the use of verified online identities.  The Reliance Framework, through its digital service myGov, provides Australians with a single secure online service to access a range of government services online. The myGov service has improved individuals’ ease of use and access to Australian government services through trusted online common credentials, providing improved online registration and authentication processes, and a single security credential which enables people to access a range of online services across agencies and channels, including via mobile applications. This whole-of-government effort will develop standards and capabilities for interacting with entities outside government that could be used by multiple agencies, rather than each agency developing its own approach. Future initiatives within the myGov service will include enhanced data validation for simple online transactions utilising services such as the DVS and the Document Lodgment Service. | | | |

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Explanatory Notes’ (2011) <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3301.0Explanatory%20Notes12011>>. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For summaries of the functions/roles of each of the State and Territory BDMRs, see <<http://australia.gov.au/topics/law-and-justice/births-deaths-and-marriages-registries>> for summaries of the functions/roles of each State and Territory BDMRs. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See <<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/gotoschool/enrolment/preschoolapptoenrol.pdf>>. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See <<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/medicare-card>>. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. See Attorney-General’s Department, *Document Verification Service* <<http://www.ag.gov.au/rightsandprotections/identitysecurity/pages/documentverificationservice.aspx>>. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)