

Birth, Death and Marriage certificates

Worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present

Birth, Death and Marriage certificates record the vital events in life and provide links between generations in your family tree.

In the early days of Australian history the churches were responsible for recording baptisms, weddings and burials within their jurisdictions. This meant that events often missed being recorded due to the tyranny of distance and there were also no set guidelines on the type or amount of information that was required. These early records are called Early Church Records (ECRs) or Parish Registers.

By 1856 each state and territory in Australia had introduced Civil Registration (for more information see: www.coraweb.com.au/bdmut.htm#indexes) which meant that by law all births, deaths and marriages had to be registered and legislation was in place which provided guidelines for the type of information that was required to complete a registration.

Points to remember:

- The information that you may find on a certificate varies greatly from the time the event occurred as well as from state to state in the amount and quality of information recorded.
- Information is only as reliable as the source. The informant on a death certificate may for example have hardly known the deceased so little information could be recorded about them.
- Be mindful of spelling variations as people often recorded information as it sounded and in earlier times not many people could read and write.
- Variations in spelling may also occur due to difficulties in deciphering the original handwriting in registers.
- It is advisable to cross-check information on certificates with other records such as monumental inscriptions, a family bible or newspaper notices.
- A marriage certificate may give details of the parents of each spouse, and is the most reliable certificate for information as both parties were present at the event and could give the information.
- Birth, death and marriage certificates will sometimes include statements as to Aboriginality, especially in earlier records, but there are no guarantees as contrary to a common belief a person's Aboriginality is not always recorded in documentary form.
- Births, deaths and marriages of Aboriginal people were often not registered. This was due, in part, to legal restrictions such as the *Queensland Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of Sale of Opium Acts 1901*, which prohibited the marriage of Aboriginal women to non-Aboriginal men without the express permission of the government.
- Births of Indigenous children were not often registered in order to protect them from removal policies. Large number of Indigenous people worked on pastoral stations where events were recorded in station papers, diaries and resources rather than in the standard birth death and marriage registrations.
- The notations 'born in the colony' or 'native' on a birth, death or marriage certificate are also not indicative of Indigenous heritage.
- See Fact Sheet 4 for more information on searching Birth, Death and Marriage indexes.



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Information typically contained on a Birth, Death or Marriage Certificate:

On a Birth Certificate


Surname
Given name of the child
Date of birth
Place of birth
Sex
Father's name
Occupation
Mother's name
Mother's maiden name
Ages
Other children of the union
Place of residence
Registration number

On a Marriage Certificate

Names of the Bride and Groom
Bride's maiden name
Their occupations
Usual place of residence
Where they were born
Any previous marriages
Names of their parents
Registration number

On a Death Certificate

Name of deceased
Sex
Date of death
Cause of death
Place of death
Age
Occupation
Residence
Place of birth
Place of marriage
Name of spouse
Children of the union
Where buried
Who the informant was
Registration number

 Births, Deaths & Marriages

New South Wales
Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995

BURIALS

Number	674 Vol: 32B
Name	James KNIGHT
Abode	Winbourne
Age	33 years
Quality or profession	Overseer
When died	21 August 1847
When buried	23 August 1847
Where ceremony performed	Parish of Mulgoa, in the County of Cumberland
By whom the ceremony was performed	Thos. C. Makinson Church of England

Before accepting copies, sight unaltered original. The original has a coloured background.

REGISTRY OF BIRTHS
DEATHS AND MARRIAGES
SYDNEY 15 Aug 2005

I hereby certify that this is a true copy of particulars recorded in a
Register in the State of New South Wales, in the Commonwealth of Australia

Greg Cherry
Registrar

*An example of a NSW burial certificate (information has come from an ECR)
- Courtesy NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages*