



ACT
Government

ACCESS CANBERRA

Births, Deaths and Marriages Financial Hardship Fee Waiver Policy

Chief Minister, Treasury and
Economic Development Directorate

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INTRODUCTION

Access Canberra Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) team perform registrations of life events occurring in the ACT. Subject to an Access Policy, Access Canberra issues certificates relating to registered events, such as birth certificates, that are subsequently relied on to prove identity. Access Canberra recognises that high value identity documents, such as those issued by BDM, are often needed to gain access to services in our community.

For people experiencing financial hardship, the gazetted fee for a BDM certificate may create a barrier to acquiring the identity documentation they need to access essential services to improve their situation. To better support individuals in these circumstances, BDM will apply this policy to issue a certificate free of charge.

PURPOSE

The Registrar-General can remit the payment of a fee or part of the fee for a registration or certificate administered under the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1997* (the Act). The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to assist in the assessment of a fee waiver request sought in partnership with a certificate application.

This policy will aid individuals experiencing financial hardship to access documents relied on to prove their identity while seeking immediate relief and services.

SCOPE

This policy applies if you are a person experiencing financial hardship and require proof of identity documents for immediate access to essential support services.

BDM proof of identity documents include:

- Birth Certificate
- Marriage Certificate
- Civil Partnership Certificate
- Change of Name Certificate
- Recognised Details Certificate
- Death Certificate

The waiving of a fee for a commemorative certificate won't ordinarily be considered. Commemorative certificates are not routinely accepted as a proof of identity document which is the primary consideration of this policy.

In every case, the decision to waive a fee will be at the ultimate discretion of the Registrar-General or their delegate.

APPLICATION PROCESS

If you are experiencing financial hardship and need a BDM certificate as proof of identity to receive immediate services, you can request a financial hardship fee waiver from the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Some examples of circumstances for requesting a financial hardship fee-waiver are provided below, however this is not an exhaustive list:

- A person's individual circumstances are such that they 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 Apply

A fee waiver request should be made in writing using the Financial Hardship Fee Waiver application. Reasons for the request, and evidence of the person's circumstances are required for assessment purposes.

Evidence

The application must include sufficient information to satisfy the Registrar-General the person is experiencing financial hardship, is in urgent need of a BDM identity certificate, and that waiving the fee is appropriate. Note; In every instance, the *reason* someone is seeking a certificate is a factor that must be considered by the Registrar-General when deciding to issuing a certificate (or not) under the BDM legislation. However, the *reason* for seeking a certificate will also provide relevant insights when deciding if granting the fee waiver is appropriate.

The Registrar-General, or their delegate, can ask for additional documentation at any time to assist with the assessment of the application.

Some examples of evidence are provided below, however this list is not exhaustive and other documents may be used as evidence to demonstrate individual circumstances:

- A letter on official letterhead from a recognised charitable organisation providing accommodation or crisis services to the person.
- A letter from a medical practitioner, social worker, support service organisation verifying that the person is unable to access funds and is without identity documents.
- A letter from a government agency verifying the person is vulnerable, financially disadvantaged and in need of identity documents.

An application will be assessed on individual circumstances; and the holding of a pension or healthcare card alone is not adequate evidence for this policy as an evaluation on the immediate need for a certificate must also be assessed.

Decision

Applications will be assessed on an individual basis with regard for the person's circumstances at the point in time of lodgement. In deciding, the Registrar-General may also consider the timeframe

between any prior issues of a free certificate with regard for mitigating risks of identity theft and misuse should duplicate certificates be issued.

The final decision on a fee waiver application will be provided to the applicant in writing.

BDM COMMITMENT

The purpose for seeking information from a person about their individual financial hardship circumstances is to enable the Registrar-General to decide if the waiving of the fee is appropriate, as specified under the relevant BDM legislation.

In discharging their function, under BDM legislation the Registrar-General is required to prevent any unreasonable intrusion into a person's privacy and all activities are performed in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2014*. The Registrar-General respects everyone's right to privacy and dignity and any information received in support of your application will only be used to make a decision under this policy and will be kept separate to the register.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, BDM is committed to:

- Interacting respectfully and empathetically to understand your individual circumstances
- Treat your personal information confidentially
- Respond promptly
- Provide information on other BDM policies that may assist you.

ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1997
Information Privacy Act 2014
Human Rights Act 2004
Births, Deaths and Marriages Certificate Access Policy (act.gov.au)

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you require further information, you can contact the Access Canberra Births, Deaths and Marriages unit on 13 22 81.

A language assistance service is available by phoning the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50

