

REMOVE BARRIERS FOR FAMILIES TO ACCESS BIRTH CERTIFICATES



Birth certificates are required by Early Childhood Education and Care services before a child can enrol into early learning. This is a significant barrier for many families living in disadvantage due to the cost, paperwork, lack of identification documents and lack of technology access required for applications and we believe that there should be fee exemptions and additional support for families who need it in order to obtain a birth certificate and access early education & care for their children.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIRTH CERTIFICATES

Access to birth registration is recognised as a fundamental human right internationally (UN 1989), and when partnered with a birth certificate, it unlocks access to education, employment, other identification documents, or government support services.

Without a birth certificate, an individual's ability to participate in society is limited, and a child is unable to enter early education which is a known evidence informed strategy for supporting children to thrive..

THE PROBLEM

Due to various complexities such as domestic violence, moving house, or damage, families may find themselves without birth certificates, or perhaps never registered their child at birth for an original certificate.

Families may not have access to technology to apply for a birth certificate, have the necessary supporting identification documents themselves to complete an application, have the finances to pay for the birth certificate or have complex caring arrangements that complicate the application process.

A fee waiver process does exist, however this is not well known, requires additional supporting documents and can be difficult for families to apply for if they are already facing other barriers. Additionally, this prolongs the process of accessing a birth certificate, further delaying a child's chance for education.

Various programs exist to support birth registration, particularly with First Nations People or rural communities, however, there remains little in person support for low-income families or those experiencing other complexities to help them overcome practical barriers in completing an application for a birth certificate and get this vital document for their children.



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THE HIVE'S DATA & ADVOCACY

The Hive Mt Drutt have an Early Learning Linker (ELL) who since 2018 has practically, emotionally and financially supported families in Mt Drutt to overcome barriers to access early education.

Of all the reasons families have requested assistance from the Early Learning Linker is support to access a birth certificate or a birth registration in order to be able to enrol in ECEC.

The Hive's Early Learning Linker: (as at June 2024)

- Has supported 61 children to apply for a birth certificate as a barrier to accessing early education.
- Of those children, 44 have required brokerage support to pay for a birth certificate
- Additionally of the total children, 14 have required support with a late birth registration
- The total of the brokerage for birth certificates spent by The Hive has been \$3500.

At a local level, The Hive have advocated with NSW Births, Deaths & Marriages' (BDM) community outreach team to utilise a portal which allows for fee-free applications, as well as reduced identification requirements. However the outreach team is not resourced enough to meet the demand across disadvantaged metro areas in NSW, and a more sustainable and long-term solution within the system is needed for families to access without contact with an organisation such as The Hive having access to a portal.

THE SOLUTIONS & IMPACT

- With the financial cost being a large factor, we ask for the **cost for birth certificates to be removed for low-income families without the need for a fee-waiver application.**
- We also ask for **increased support for completing birth certificate applications to be available in all communities for those who have complex circumstances** such as low literacy, lack of identification documents or complex caring arrangements. We ask for an increase in staffing for community outreach teams within BDM or utilise Linkers or Navigators to provide support to families and address complex barriers faced when completing applications.

If birth certificates are equitable and more accessible, more children will be able to access early education and be ready to start school well and later engage in employment and social participation.

CONTACT US

To learn more and to help us make this change please contact:
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