

Who's Your Mob – First Nations Family History

Births, deaths and marriages

Birth, death and marriage records

Birth, death and marriage records are the links you need to form your story, helping you connect one branch of your family to another.

Working backwards from yourself, you should think of all the family names you know, the year your family members were born, married or died and where they were from. These can be keys for your search. Even knowing just one can be a great starting point.

Types of birth, death and marriage records

There are two main types of birth, death and marriage records

- Government records, which are also called civil registrations
- Parish registers, which are church records

It is important to note that information about First Nations people may have been recorded differently.

Protection and welfare boards often recorded births, deaths and marriages of people who were defined as 'Aborigines' and 'supervised' by the board.

Information you may find in birth, death and marriage certificates

Birth certificate:

- child's name
- date of birth
- place of birth
- sex
- father's name, occupation and age
- mother's name, maiden name and age
- other children of the union
- place of residence
- registration number

Marriage certificate:

- names of bride and groom
- bride's maiden name or former name
- occupations
- usual place of residence
- where born
- previous marriages
- parents' names
- registration number

Death certificate:

- name of deceased
- sex
- date of death
- cause of death
- place of death
- age
- occupation
- residence
- place of birth

Sometimes you will see the word 'native' on a birth, death, or marriage certificate. Be aware that this notation, especially on early records, does not refer to Aboriginality, but refers to a person born in Australia rather than immigrating from England or elsewhere.

Searching for birth, death and marriage records in Queensland

You can search the online indexes at the [Queensland Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages](#) for records dating back to 1829. You can then use the registration number to purchase copies of historical certificates online.

These indexes are searchable from 1829 for the following periods:

- Births are searchable up to 100 years ago
- Marriages are searchable up to 75 years ago
- Deaths are searchable up to 30 years ago

Compulsory registration of births, deaths and marriages began in 1856 when Queensland was part of New South Wales. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births, deaths and marriages were not consistently registered in Queensland until the 1940s.

Many First Nations people worked on pastoral stations, and events may have been recorded in station papers and diaries rather than in official registrations. Sadly, many of these records have not survived, because most stations were privately owned, and preservation of documents relied on the individual owners.

Births were not always recorded and are the least reliable type of record. If a child was born on a pastoral station, it often depended on the station manager reporting the birth. Births of Aboriginal children were frequently not registered in order to protect them from removal policies.

Marriage registrations are more reliable because the information was provided by the people themselves. Prior to World War One, marriages might be found in church records. Aboriginal people could seek permission to marry, and the marriage would then be recorded. Marriage records are difficult to find if the marriage was not legal or official.

Deaths had to be recorded, but the name recorded may vary or be unreliable (such as anglicised or Aboriginal names), making it hard to find the name. The information also relied on the family providing the correct information.

Registry offices outside Queensland

To apply for a birth, death or marriage certificate outside of Queensland please visit the state's registry office for more details.

- [Australian Capital Territory](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)
- [Papua New Guinea](#)
- [South Australia](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
- [Victoria](#)
- [Western Australia](#)

State Library of Queensland has copies of indexes to births, deaths and marriages. See [Research Guide : Births, deaths and marriages](#) for more information.

What if I can't find a birth, death, or marriage certificate?

If you have not been able to find a certificate of birth, death or marriage, you could try:

- [Centre for Indigenous Family History Studies](#)
- [Community and Personal Histories team](#)
- [Church records](#)
- [Tindale Collection of Aboriginal genealogies](#)
- [Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Strait Islander genealogies](#)

Need further information?

(07) 3840 7810 | slq.qld.gov.au/ask

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