# Information Sheet

# **The Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program**

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# **Background**

Birth registration and certificates are arguably the first step toward full participation, employment, rights and identity as an Australian citizen. Without a birth certificate, people face life-long struggles to access mainstream services, like getting a driver’s license, enrolling in job-training programs, obtaining tax file numbers, joining sporting clubs, opening bank accounts – even getting into school!

The cost of birth certificates varies from State to State – up to $51 in NSW. They can be issued after parents/guardians register their child’s birth, which by law is meant to happen during the first 60 days after birth. People then need to apply separately for birth certificates and pay the required fee.

Yet despite this, many do not register, and more than half a million Australians**, *including tens of thousands of first nation peoples***, do not obtain or own birth certificates.

About 1/3 of all aboriginal children born in Australia each year (6,000) do not register their births or obtain birth certificates in their first year of life. This makes them particularly vulnerable to missing out later in life.

# **How Pathfinders National Aboriginal Birth Certificate Program Helps**

**What?** Pathfinders is a not for profit organisation. We are funded by the Australian Government, specifically the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to provide ***free birth certificates for young Aboriginal people.*** We also receive generous in-kind support from many stakeholders and volunteers who assist our work.

**How?** Pathfinders collaborates with community groups and organisationsto provide **Sign-Up days.** Sign-Up days are held in accessible and friendly community venues, where people feel comfortable and if necessary, can obtain confidential and culturally appropriate help when applying for birth certificates. Sign-Up days are designed to be enjoyable for all, showcasing community life, often with food, music and sporting events.

* Soon after the Sign-Up day, the Pathfinders NABC Program Team sends applications off in a batch to the relevant State or Territory Registry. Pathfinders also pays for birth certificates on behalf of applicants.
* When requested, we also follow up applications, assisted by community agencies, to help ensure that birth certificates are delivered.

**Who?** Young Aboriginal people who attend a Sign-Up day and who need a birth certificate can apply. We assist **job-seekers, trainees, students and children ready to enroll in school and/or preschool.**

**Why?** We want every Australian to have a birth certificate, and to make our nation a fairer place. We want everyone to develop a legal and personal identity, to be full citizens, to contribute to society, and get the most out of life. We are also asking governments to make birth certificates **free and automatic at birth**, so future generations of Australians will not have to fill out paperwork and pay for this basic right of citizenship.

**For more Information Please Contact:**

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